This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

PRESENTED TO THE LIBRARY

BY

PROFESSOR H. G. FIEDLER

1490

THE

LETTERS

OF

GESSNER

AND

HIS FAMILY.

FROM THE GERMAN.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR VERNOR AND HOOD, POULTRY,

BY T. BENSLEY, BOLT COURT.

1804.

- 9 NOV. 1944

CONTENTS.

LETTER		PAGE
1.	C. Geſſner to his father	1
2.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	6
3.	C. Geſſner to his father	8
4.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	12
5.	Mad. Geſſner to her ſon	15
6.	C. Ceſſner to his father	18
7.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	22
8.	C. Geſſner to his parents	27
9.	Mad. Geſſner to her ſon	37
10.	C. Geſſner to his parents	40
11.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	49
12.	Mad. Geſſner to her ſon	55
13.	C. Geſſner to his parents	59
14.	C. Geſſner to his father	66
15.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	69
16.	C. Geſſner to his father	73
17.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	78
18.	C. Geſſner to his parents	83
19.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	90
20.	Mad. Geſſner to her ſon	95
21.	C. Geſſner to his father	98
22.	C. Geſſner to his father	101
23.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	104
24.	C. Geſſner to his father	109
25.	C. Geſſner to his father	112
26.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	119
27.	C. Geſſner to his father	124
28.	C. Geſſner to his parents	129

LETTER		PAGE
29.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	131
30.	C. Geſſner to his father	133
31.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	135
32.	C. Geſſner to his father	138
33.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	142
34.	C. Geſſner to his father	145
35.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	148
36.	C. Geſſner to his parents	151
37.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	155
38.	C. Geſſner to his father	158
39.	C. Geſſner to his father	161
40.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	166
41.	C. Geſſner to his father	169
42.	C. Geſſner to his father	175
43	C. Geſſner to his father	179
44.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	185
45.	C. Geſſner to his parents	194
46.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	198
47.	C. Geſſner to his father	201
48.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	208
49.	Mad. Geſſner to her ſon	213
50.	C. Geſſner to his father	216
51.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	222
52.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	227
53.	C. Geſſner to his father	231
54.	S. Geſſner to his ſon	235
55.	C. Geſſner to his father	241
56.	C. Geſſner to his father	245
57.	H. Geſſner to his brother	246

THE LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

My deareſt Father, Munich, 11th April, 1784.

I HASTEN to acquaint you with our ſafe arrival in this city. The few days, we ſhall ſtay here, will be ſo entirely occupied in viſiting the gallery, that, with the exception of our table aſſociates, who conſiſt chiefly of young men of faſhion and clergymen, we ſhall ſee but little of Munich or its inhabitants. We have, however, notwithſtanding, already become acquainted with ſome clever men. The young baron de B—— who has been in Switzerland, ſeems deſirous of returning to us the civilities, he received in that country, and has accompanied us every where. We have ſeen ſome regiments perform their evolutions; and, out of reſpect to our conductor, the colonel of one of them had the goodneſs to allow me to examine his fineſt horſes, and to make ſtudies and portraits of them at my leiſure.

We were much preſſed for time as we paſſed through Augſburgh, and, as it happened alſo to be on a holiday, we were denied acceſs to the churches and cabinets of the curious: we had nevertheleſs the good fortune to gain admiſſion to Mr. Buckle, a celebrated collector of medals, who ſhowed us his collection with great politeneſs. The objects in it, moſt intereſting to me, were a large number of drawings and ſtudies, by Rugendas, ſome drawings by Ridinger and H. Roos, and ſome by Holtzer, a freſco painter of great merit, who died when very young. Some of the houſes in this place are decorated with his works: among others, I remarked a dance of peaſants, in which the figures are well drawn, and ſeem as if ſtarting from the wall.

We ſaw alſo at M. de Haydens two good originals, by Rugendas; they are battle pieces. The compoſition is very grand, and they are finiſhed with care: ſome of the figures and horſes cannot be ſurpaſſed. There are alſo in this collection two fine copies after Veit, and a burleſque concert, by Manfredi, in which the figures are nearly of the ſize of life, well drawn, and with a good effect of light and ſhadow.

You will not, I am ſure, require from me a detailed account of the gallery of Munich. Such a multi-

tude

tude of pictures, filling seven large rooms on one floor, occasions more fatigue than pleasure to an eye, that wishes to view them all in one visit. I will therefore only mention those, which made the greatest impression on me. And I must first of all notice the sketches of Rubens, of which there are many in this collection; and though they are all traced with a rapid pencil, yet are so full of fire and so correctly drawn, that I prefer them to many high finished pictures. The portrait of his wife, painted by himself, the size of life, is a beautiful countenance, and the colouring is so perfect as to be quite a deception. I also observed some heads by Vandyke and Rembrandt, which have a wonderful effect, and fixed me for a long time to one spot through admiration. In some pictures of the Italian school I was much pleased with the drawing, but the colouring appeared black and of a dirty hue. Two pictures by Wouverman, one especially which represents a stable, and has an effect of light that is quite original, particularly attracted my attention, as master-pieces in the style I have adopted. Yet the contemplation of them gave me pain. I felt discouraged and cast down, when I reflected on the great superiority of this artist: I considered, however, that he acquired it by continued labour and constant exertion; and this idea, by exciting me to similar efforts, gave me hopes of obtaining equal success.

There are not many landſcapes here; among the few are ſome of Huiſman's, and ſome of Salvator Roſa's, with very graceful figures; a large picture of animals by Roſa di Tivoli; the ſheep in it are as large as life, and ſtrikingly natural, as are alſo ſome wild animals by Veit and by Voſs, which appear ſo ferocious that they frighten one; ſome fine paintings by Rugendas; and laſtly, ſome of Dujardin's works, in which I have obſerved much truth and nature in the animals, a ſimple ſtyle of compoſition, and good colouring.

The collection of pictures of the Flemiſh ſchool, which this gallery contains, is, I believe, one of the moſt valuable in Europe. I have remarked, among others, ſome by Brauer, painted with the utmoſt accuracy, and producing a ſingular degree of illuſion; the objects are as diſtinct as in a camera obſcura. There are alſo ſome pictures of Teniers, of Mieris, and of Gerard Dow, of the higheſt finiſhing and moſt careful execution, which are nevertheleſs very ſpirited. But nothing in the whole gallery gave me ſo much delight as a dead Chriſt, by Raphael, although connoiſſeurs do not entirely agree about its originality. The Virgin Mary is in tears, ſtanding by the body of her Son. The colouring of this picture is far from brilliant, and is not ſtriking at firſt ſight; but the noble ſimplicity and forcible expreſſion of the whole impreſs themſelves ſtrongly

on

on the mind upon a closer investigation, and no terms can give an idea of the effect. The colouring is that of Nature herself, and the deep affliction of the Virgin is delineated with so much truth, that it is impossible to refrain from tears. After leaving this picture, it is not without pleasure, that you observe two figures, by Albert Durer, the size of life, which appear to be portraits. The heads are animated, the character well marked, and the folds of the drapery are happily arranged.

We are just returned from a little excursion to Schleissheim and Nymphenbourg. In the first of these palaces we found a great number of valuable things in gold and silver, but very few pictures. It was nearly the same at Nymphenbourg; the castle is ornamented with more taste than that of Schleissheim, but it contains, like that, a great profusion of gold and silver and mosaic; and these, in my opinion, are more curious than beautiful. The gardens of Nymphenbourg may afford a pleasing view in summer; but at present the statues are still covered, the walks are deserted, and every thing bears the appearance of winter. Farewell, my dear Parents.

Your son,

C. GESSNER.

LETTER II.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, 24th April.

YOUR letter, my dear ſon, gave us inexpreſſible pleaſure. Your mother particularly, who has been in a ſtate of continual anxiety from her tender ſolicitude for your welfare, now feels comforted and happy at hearing, that you are in good health, and, what is not leſs ſatisfactory, that you have made ſome better arrangements for your journey.

The firſt days of your abſence were very melancholy. We talked of you continually, and ſeldom without a moiſtened eye; then Henry would try to diſſipate our ſadneſs by ſome drollery, and our ſmiles and tears were mingled together in whimſical confuſion. We are at preſent much more calm, though not leſs occupied with the thoughts of you. Henry never forgets to drink your health at table; one motive may be, that by ſo doing he gets another glaſs, but he undoubtedly feels towards you a very ſincere affection. Your portrait is often taken down, and offered in turn to the whole family to be kiſſed; and if theſe tender ſcenes do not ſpeedily terminate, I am much afraid, that in a ſhort time you will reſemble John Huſs in the church at Conſtance.

I feel

I feel highly gratified, my dear ſon, to hear you ſpeak with ſuch a lively emotion of the pictures you ſaw at Augſburgh and at Munich. I perceive in it the true enthuſiaſm of your art; an enthuſiaſm, which, being continually increaſed by the ſight of grand originals, will form the glory and happineſs of your future life. Oh! that I could have ſeen you, when you entered the gallery at Munich! I never wiſhed it more.

Although you feel ſo much admiration for the great maſters, yet never ſuffer their beauties to entice you from the ſtudy of nature. Examine, in each of them, in what particular inſtance they have moſt ſucceſsfully imitated this firſt of models; endeavour to diſcover the beſt method, which they have employed to expreſs it; and, on leaving the works of art, always return to nature herſelf. Too ſtrong a partiality for any maſter will make you a manneriſt; you will ſee a proof of this at Dreſden, in the works of a number of painters, in which Dietrich is more frequently obſervable than objects in nature. Never forget, for a ſingle moment, that the firſt years of your ſtudies will entirely influence the tenour of your future life; and that, if you employ them to advantage, they may hereafter render you the pride of your father and of your country. Farewell. Be well and happy. I am your truly affectionate father.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER III.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, May 9th.

On the 6th of this month we arrived in ſafety at this place, and were received in the moſt friendly manner by Meſſrs. Graaf and Zing. The latter gave Freudweiler and myſelf ſome truly fatherly advice; and ſuch a friend is very neceſſary to me; for I feel ſenſibly, that I am like a piece of furniture out of its place in this brilliant and poliſhed world. I am beginning now to adonize a little. My head is already of a different cut, and I ſhall ſoon be dreſſed from head to foot in the faſhion of the day. I occupy a room in the houſe of M. Graaf, and eat at his table. Freudweiler lodges with profeſſor Becker. Feer arrived yeſterday; you will eaſily imagine the joy this circumſtance occaſioned.

We did not remain at Leipſic, where we arrived during the fair, longer than was neceſſary to ſee what was moſt intereſting in that city. When I beheld that ſtrange and varied mixture of ſo many thouſands of men, I was induced to conſider Leipſic as

as the point of union for the whole world. In Richter's coffee-houſe, where five or ſix hundred perſons of every country were joſtled and preſſed together in ſix or ſeven rooms, the Greeks and Turks particularly attracted my attention by the juſt proportion of their figure, their noble and ſtrongly marked countenance, and the picturesque ſtyle of their dreſs. We alſo found at Leipſic a great number of Swiſs, with whom we took a fraternal draught in one of the municipal cellars.

The horſe-market preſented a very intereſting collection of objects to me. I drew there ſeveral very fine horſes; but I relinquiſhed the pleaſure of ſeeing them exerciſed, to go and hear a ſermon from Zollikoffer, whoſe grand and ſimple eloquence deeply affected me. It was on this occaſion too, that I formed an acquaintance with that excellent man Weiſſe, the author of the Children's Friend, who was ſtanding near me in the church. He deſires me to ſay many kind things to you from him. Zollikoffer was ſo much engaged at that time, that I did not think myſelf juſtified in making myſelf known to him.

M. Bauſe received us with great politeneſs, and ſhewed us a fine collection belonging to Wagner. He was employed in finiſhing a head copied from Reynolds, which was painted entirely for effect.

One

One would ſuppoſe, at firſt ſight, that there is nothing in it, and that indeed is true, for it has very little work in it, but at a little diſtance it has a wonderful effect. It is a girl of about twelve years of age, who is leaning both her arms on a table, one finger of her right hand on her mouth, which is ſmiling. The upper part of the head is light; the forehead and eyes are in ſhadow; the eyes are full of fire, and her ſmile partakes of a good deal of cunning and archneſs. The deſign is beautiful in the higheſt degree, and the drapery in true taſte. The whole is painted with the utmoſt facility, yet all is complete. This picture would occaſion a great deal of work to any one, who would undertake to engrave it. I have ſeen the drawings of M. Bauſe's daughter, which ſeem to promiſe a great genius.

I have many friendly things to ſay to you from M. Reich, whoſe genuine Swiſs frankneſs pleaſes me very much; from profeſſor Huber, to whom with much difficulty I was obliged to muſter my little ſtock of French; and laſtly, from the good old Oeſer. Unfortunately we were too much hurried to examine properly the collection of Winkler. I was extremely ſtruck with a very fine Rembrandt, and with a landſcape by Ruyſdael. The latter is nothing more than a ſmall lake encircled with mountains, ſome ſandy hills, a corn-field, and in the foreground one or two oaks. The corn-field is lighted

lighted by the rays of the ſun, and is ſo brilliant, that you involuntarily raiſe your hand before your eyes to prevent it from dazzling you. There is alſo in this collection a picture by Loutherbourg, which is highly ſpoken of. For my part, I ſee in it what may be termed a fine manner, a bold and brilliant pencil, but no traces of nature in any part.

We ſold our chaiſe at Leipſic with ſome loſs, and afterwards travelled in what they call the yellow coach. We were much amuſed to find ourſelves packed up in this box with a ſet of people totally unknown to each other, and brought together by accident; and Freudweiler's good humour, added to mine, kept the company, which otherwiſe would have been ſtupid enough, in high ſpirits.

The great politeneſs of the Saxons, for every waſherwoman calls me, "my love" and "my dear," has rather ſurpriſed my Helvetic ſimplicity.

I have filled my paper; ſo farewell, my dear parents.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER IV.

S. GESNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, 22d May.

NOTHING could have afforded us a higher gratification, my dear ſon, than the receipt of your letter, and the intelligence of your ſafe arrival at Dreſden; we were the more impatient to hear from you, as we had been informed, by means of a letter received by a merchant in our town from one of his correſpondents at Nuremberg, that you had been for ſome time confined to your room by ſome accidental injury to your knee. He luckily added, that you had juſt quitted that city with your travelling companions, which, in ſome meaſure, relieved our anxiety concerning you.

The circumſtantial details, which you have given us of all that is worthy of obſervation in your journey, have afforded us the greateſt pleaſure; they convince me, that you ardently ſeize every opportunity, which preſents itſelf, of ſeeing works of art; and your opinion of them proves, that you do not ſuffer yourſelf to be ſeduced by glitter, and that true merit alone obtains your ſuffrage: with ſuch a turn of mind, it will not be difficult for you to

to form your taſte, if you can viſit the gallery in company with ſome real connoiſſeurs. Be cautious, however, of deciding too haſtily, and never judge, till after a very ſtrict examination. I have always found myſelf well repaid for ſeeking and obſerving in every work, whatever it may poſſeſs of merit and beauty; and unleſs there be ſomething ſtrikingly faulty, I willingly give the juſt tribute of praiſe to the author. I have known many people, who felt proud of being able to diſtinguiſh, on the firſt glance of any work, what were its defects, and to point out its moſt trifling errors; but, in my opinion, it requires infinitely more taſte and knowledge to appreciate real beauties, than to diſcover faults; added to which, my way of judging in ſuch caſes procures me infinitely more pleaſure than theſe great critics can poſſibly enjoy. However, I do not wiſh, for this reaſon, to diſſuade you from chuſing thoſe works for your ſtudies, which are eſteemed the moſt perfect.

M. and Mad. Graaf have given me the moſt convincing proof of their ineſtimable friendſhip, by receiving you into their houſe; but we cannot either hope or deſire, that you ſhould remain with them long; for it would be exceedingly diſtreſſing to me to conceive, that they impoſed on themſelves the ſlighteſt reſtraint on your account. They will be kind to you even more than we have any right to expect, if they will have the goodneſs to place

you

you in a reſpectable family, allowing you the liberty of viſiting them frequently, and profiting from their good advice. It would alſo be very advantageous for you, if M. Graaf would take the trouble of directing your ſtudies. Aſſure M. Zing, alſo, of our gratitude for the friendſhip he ſhows you. How fortunate you are, my ſon, to be ſo kindly received by men of ſuch diſtinguiſhed merit! I know you well enough to feel aſſured, that you will exert yourſelf to the utmoſt of your power to render yourſelf every day more deſerving of their friendſhip, by your induſtry and your good conduct. I hope ſoon to receive later accounts of your health, of the new acquaintances you have formed, and of the arrangements you have adopted for your ſtudies. Do not, I conjure you, ever neglect even a ſingle day in the purſuit of this object: remember, that your aim is, to obtain one of the firſt ſtations in your art; and conſider the enormous taſk, which this ambition impoſes on you.

It gives me great pleaſure to hear that Feer is at preſent with you. Say a thouſand kind things to him for me, and alſo to Freudweiler. I beg to offer my grateful thanks to M. and Mad. Graaf and M. Zing, and I am with the moſt tender affection, your father,

S. GESSNER.

LETTER V.

MAD. GESSNER TO HER SON.

YOUR father has given up the pen to me, and I alſo will tell you how truly my heart is ſatisfied with your letters, and with the whole of your conduct. I cannot, however, expreſs it better than your father has already done. I was delighted with all your remarks on works of art as well as on other ſubjects. I obſerve with pleaſure, that you can, on all occaſions, and at all times, preſerve your good ſenſe and good humour.

Do not laugh, my dear ſon, that I ſhould praiſe your obſervations on matters relating to the arts; I, who, as you well know, am totally ignorant about them. There is a part of your letter from Munich, which affected me very ſtrongly. Speaking of one of the fineſt pictures, you ſay, "I felt myſelf diſheartened and caſt down, while contemplating the great ſuperiority of this artiſt; and it was only by reflecting on the immenſe labour and continued efforts, which ſuch maſter-pieces muſt have required,

required, that I regained my courage and my ardour." This paſſage, my dear ſon, is to me as precious as gold, and I ſend it to you again, becauſe I wiſh you to impreſs it ſtrongly on your mind. The remembrance of this may alſo be a uſeful preſervative from too great confidence in your abilities, to which a warm imagination may ſometimes be liable, or from the deſpondence you might occaſionally feel from the contemplation of grand originals. Continue, therefore, my dear ſon, to form a ſound judgment and a pure taſte from your own obſervations. Your mind, while yet young and flexible, may receive whatever impreſſions you wiſh. Be careful, that your abilities do not inſpire in you too much confidence, leſt it ſhould happen to you as it has to many others, that they have never poſſeſſed any greater merit than that of having good abilities.

Steinbruchel, who reads all your letters with much pleaſure, and takes a lively intereſt in whatever relates to you, wiſhes you could meet with ſome worthy literary character at Dreſden, who would direct you in your choice of books. It is not neceſſary that you ſhould become a learned man, but yet your imagination ſhould be well ſtocked with grand and beautiful ideas. He thinks it right to guard you againſt the literary publications, which are at preſent in faſhion: and though they undoubtedly poſſeſs much intereſt and attraction, and are diſcuſſed

diſcuſſed in all companies, yet they would add but little to your ſtock of knowledge and information, and might injure your taſte.

How much pleaſure I experienced, my dear ſon, in hearing, that you deprived yourſelf of one of your favourite amuſements, to go to hear Zollikoffer! Continue thus to prefer what is beſt to what is only good, and then you will find it always eaſy to act well on every occaſion, not by inſtinct but from principle.

From the ſatisfaction, with which you ſeem to ſpeak of your numerous acquaintance at Dreſden, I conclude you have entirely overcome your timidity; I am not ſorry for it, for exceſſive baſhfulneſs is not a good letter of recommendation, and often caſts an unfavourable ſhade on thoſe, who are affected with this malady. Farewell,

Your mother,

J. GESSNER.

LETTER VI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, July 11, 1784.

You may eaſily imagine the pleaſure I felt on receiving your letters. I read them over and over a thouſand times: how much every paſſage delights me! You have, no doubt, been ſurpriſed at not having received any from me for ſo long a period; I aſſure you this is not the firſt, which I have attempted to write to you; but until now, whenever I have taken up the pen, I have been ſo extremely affected, and ſo many things have crowded into my mind, that I never could expreſs myſelf.

You mention, in your laſt letter, that you had heard from Nuremberg the account of my fall. I am truly grieved at the anxiety, which it muſt have occaſioned you. I did not think it of ſufficient conſequence to ſpeak of it myſelf, for it was nothing more than putting my left knee out of joint, and this accident was immediately remedied. I ſuppoſe you muſt have been a little puzzled with that ſentence in Freudweiler's letter, which ſaid, that we were

were not on friendly terms with the preſiding Deity of Munich; but it was, in fact, this poor wooden deity, which was the cauſe of the accident to my knee, by paſſing near us in a proceſſion, in which we unexpectedly found ourſelves involved. We were obliged to kneel like the reſt of the populace; and, in order to act my part better, I began, moſt devoutly, to beat my breaſt; juſt at that moment, the mob threw me down, and a disjointed knee was the reward of my hypocriſy.

I ſuppoſe, that at the preſent time you are at Sihlwald. The recollection of that delightful ſpot is accompanied by ſo deep a ſhade of regret, that I am obliged to ſummon all my reaſon to overcome it, particularly when a view, ſuch as that which now preſents itſelf before my eyes, forms ſo ſtriking a contraſt to that ſmiling ſcene. Perhaps at this moment my father is drawing or painting ſome beautiful view from nature; or perhaps he is riding through the woods, accompanied by my brother Henry, with the ranger's ſon behind him to amuſe him with his innocent prattle. Perhaps too, you are ſeated on the turf before the houſe with my uncle and our dear Steinbruchel; or elſe you are feaſting on butter and honey with the ranger's family; and my father, you know, is always the firſt to make thoſe good people merry. And when I tranſport myſelf, in idea, to theſe charming abodes, I have ſome difficulty in preventing a fit of our national

low ſpirits, when abſent from our country. Diſtribute my regards and my kiſſes to all the inhabitants of your happy valley, not even excepting the horſes and dogs. Think of me in your delightful walks; think too, that I alſo enjoy ſome pleaſure. Do not, however, ſuppoſe, that I lead a diſſipated life, and that I ſeek for pleaſure without having firſt earned it by labour. By no means, I am fully ſenſible of the value of every moment that I ſpend; and I huſband my time with the moſt ſcrupulous economy.

I have already painted ſeveral pictures which ſeem to have pleaſed Meſſrs. Graaf and Zing, with the former of whom I ſtill continue to reſide. M. Graaf encourages me to be very aſſiduous in my ſtudies, and tells me, without wiſhing to flatter me, that I have ſurpaſſed his expectations, and that I require nothing more than to paint a great deal in order to acquire that facility, which is only obtained by practice.

I have made only two new acquaintances, ſince I wrote laſt: a M. Rumpelt, a veterinary ſurgeon; and an officer of the name of Berchholtz, who paints battle pieces with conſiderable energy and fire.

With regard to reading, you will be glad to know, my dear father, that I take much delight in it. I was particularly pleaſed in peruſing thoſe of

of your works, which you gave me on my departure. I am at preſent reading Thomſon's Seaſons, and I doubt, whether it be poſſible to find a better painter than he is.

I cannot yet give you a deſcription of the gallery. How much I wiſh, that you could ſee it. The regulations reſpecting it are troubleſome for artiſts. The inſpector and the truſtees have the ſole management, which often renders it unpleaſant to young artiſts, and prevents them from returning. Beſides which, the gallery is only open from nine in the morning till twelve, and in the afternoon from two till five: by which means thoſe loſe half their time, who cannot employ it to advantage at home; and it is very tireſome for thoſe, who paint in oil, to be ſo frequently interrupted. In addition to all this, we are forbidden to copy the whole of any picture, which is very injurious to thoſe, who are copyiſts by profeſſion. There are many pictures here in the ſtyle I follow, and particularly a fine collection of Wouverman's. However, you need not be apprehenſive, that I ſhall employ too much of my time in copying, I will follow your advice, and ſhall not forget that nature is the beſt original.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER VII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, July 17, 1784.

You occaſioned us much uneaſineſs, my dear ſon, and almoſt made us angry by your ſilence, juſt at the period, when we were moſt anxious to hear from you. You had informed us of your arrival at Dreſden; but what could be more intereſting to us than to know how you were ſettled there, what plan you had formed for purſuing your ſtudies, and what connexions you had made?

Your letter arrived juſt at the moment, when I was making a reſolution not to drink your health again, which your brother and I have done very regularly every night at ſupper. You may therefore judge of my anger! More than two months had elapſed without receiving a ſingle line from you. At that inſtant your brother burſt into the room, leaping with joy and crying, "a letter! a letter!" —The ſcene, which followed, was worthy of a painter's pencil; we all ſeized your letter, and, as if we had

had been famiſhed, we tried to devour it at one morſel; but thanks to your ſcrawl, and the number of words omitted, we were obliged to ſtop every moment. We ſnatched the paper from each other alternately, every one trying if he could ſurpaſs the others either in decyphering it, or gueſſing its contents. At length the labour was accompliſhed; and what do you think was the reſult? We think, that you have the heart and feelings of an honeſt and worthy man; that you enter on your taſk with reflection; and that you labour with perſeverance and ardour, to become great in your art. How happy, my child, do we feel in the hopes you give us! Your letter is a medley of a hundred things, which have all afforded us pleaſure. But, when we do not begin to write till the poſt is about to depart, our letters are apt to be haſty, and it is natural enough to forget thoſe things which are of moſt importance. Thus, for example, you tell us, that you are ſtill at M. Graaf's; but you do not mention, whether you are to continue there. Conſider, my dear ſon, of the infinite advantage, which will accrue to you from having it in your power to avail yourſelf at all times of the advice of ſuch an artiſt. Beſides which, you will always meet in his houſe with good ſociety and people of taſte. Do not neglect this opportunity of forming your manners: there are many artiſts who have loſt thoſe advantages, which they might otherwiſe have obtained,

by a fooliſh timidity and ignorance of the world. I obſerve with pleaſure, that you are beginning to loſe a little of your baſhfulneſs.

You ſay, that the greater part of the young artiſts deſiſt from viſiting the gallery, becauſe they cannot enjoy a perfect liberty in it. But, what folly! is it not a valuable acquiſition to have the means of obſerving and ſtudying the great maſters? This advantage is not the only one, which reſults from this eſtabliſhment; continue, therefore, to viſit the gallery as much as poſſible, and, above all, do not neglect any opportunity of ſeeing it with true connoiſſeurs.

You have already worked a great deal, you ſay; and I am delighted with the modeſty, with which you ſpeak of the approbation you received from M. Graaf. Be always modeſt, my child, but without timidity. Do you ſuppoſe, however, that a little detail of your works would not have been intereſting to us? In future, do not ever omit to afford us this gratification.

I wiſh you had given me ſome idea of the plan you purſue in your ſtudies: what means do you employ for that of the human figure? Remember, that anatomy is the only ſolid foundation; you muſt not, however, neglect beauty and grandeur of form.

form. The antique, as you well know, will give you the beſt models: you do not ſay whether you ſtudy them, nor whether you draw at the academy from life. Much is to be done to acquire fame, but your enthuſiaſm for your art will render all things eaſy. I again adviſe you to continue in the ſtyle you have made choice of; but if you wiſh to obtain a diſtinguiſhed ſtation in that ſtyle, do not neglect the noble and graceful forms, in which the human figure abounds.

Be careful to acquire a fluency in the French language. You will not be all your life in Germany, and even if you were, a knowledge of it is always eſteemed a mark of a good education.

If you have not yet met with Lippert, do not defer ſeeing him any longer, and aſſure him of my kindeſt regard.

I am glad, that you have peruſed my writings with pleaſure. I think my letter on the art of landſcape painting may contain ſome uſeful inſtructions for you. I am delighted alſo with your taſte for Thomſon: you will one day feel how much works of that nature give a ſpring to the imagination of a painter, which would be inanimate without them. Continue to read, but only ſuch works as are the beſt in their kind.

One

One more piece of advice I beg you will follow, in order that you may write your letters with more eaſe; and not be ſo forgetful of what you have to ſay. Put a ſheet of paper on your table, and when you wiſh to communicate to us any thing that you have thought or done, write it down immediately. To-day, perhaps, you will write two lines, to-morrow a whole page, and thus by degrees, the letter will be written.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER VIII.

GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

My dear Parents! Dreſden, July 29, 1784.

We returned yeſterday from a little excurſion to Hohenſtein. It was a little tour, which four artiſts beſides myſelf agreed to make for the purpoſe of ſketching from nature. This country, covered with wood and interſected with mountains, is quite a paradiſe for landſcape painters. Every ſtep offers a romantic, or at leaſt an intereſting ſcene. At every turn you meet with a pictureſque rock, or a pretty cottage, or a fine tree; and the ruins, which are ſcattered over the country, add a freſh charm by the great variety of objects. It is impoſſible to draw from nature here without having permiſſion expreſsly for that purpoſe; and to this circumſtance, which was very unpleaſant in itſelf, we owe the ſatisfaction of becoming acquainted with the bailiff, who is a very amiable man; and the inhabitants, where we took up our quarters, ſhewed us every poſſible kindneſs. We made a rich harveſt in this journey; and though all were equally induſtrious, each

each found time to contribute to the amuſement of the reſt of the party. Our return was attended with ſome whimſical circumſtances. We did not limit ourſelves to any hour, and even the bad weather, which overtook us, had no influence over our ſpirits. When we arrived at Königſtein we were condemned to paſs the night in a hayloft; we were wet to the ſkin, and the wind blew in at every corner. Entertaining no hopes of getting any ſleep in this ſituation, we endeavoured to diſſipate our ſorrows by acting a play: this was ſufficient to confirm our landlord in the ſuſpicion he had already formed, that we were actors. The report was ſoon ſpread through the country, and, during the whole of our voyage on the Elbe, the people ran in crowds to ſee us, whenever we ſtopped. I believe too, that I had the honour to be taken for the Punch of the party, for all the children ſeemed to view me with particular ſatisfaction. I intend ſhortly to return to that ſpot with all my apparatus, that I may paint from nature.

I have thoughts of ſending ſome of my works to the firſt exhibition of pictures, which is to take place in the month of March next year. Meſſrs. Graaf and Zing think, that by ſo doing, I may acquire credit.

The labour of copying ſtill diſpleaſes me, becauſe I have

I have not ſufficient practice to give thoſe touches, which I feel to be the beſt part of the picture; and which I wiſh to expreſs in my copy. This is not the caſe in working from nature. The latter forms my greateſt delight, for I can diſcern how much further it leads me than mere copying. Many young artiſts are of a different opinion, and find the latter infinitely more difficult than the other; for my part, I think I ſucceed better from nature: however, I am not the leſs reſolved to copy over and over again with the utmoſt aſſiduity, the fineſt parts of Ruyſdael and Wouverman, ſuch as trees, &c.

I viſit the gallery every day, and always with increaſed pleaſure; yet I am not acquainted with a tenth part of the pictures. It is one of the moſt numerous, as well as moſt valuable, collections in Europe; in my favourite ſtyle alone there are about ſixty of the fineſt Wouvermans, two or three of the beſt of Borgognone, and about as many Querforts; but only one picture by Rugendas, and that, not one of his beſt. Querfort, an imitator of Wouverman's, may paſs for a great artiſt, but in my opinion he ſhares the common fate of imitators; the greateſt part of them labour without inſpiration, in ſhort, without ſoul, and for that reaſon they never equal the original.

Among

Among the landſcapes, I was particularly ſtruck with the famous picture by Ruyſdael, and two by Claude Lorraine. The effect of the former is ſo grand, that nothing but nature can produce a finer. It is a hunting piece, with a ſtag, purſued through a pond into a large neighbouring foreſt; the ſun darts his rays through the trees on a ſand bank. The ſhadows are in broad maſſes, and the light, which comes from behind a dark cloud, flickering on the ſurface of the water, on the ſand-bank, and on the branches of the trees, produces the moſt picturesque effect. The greeniſh reflection of the turf, the trees and every other object in the water, is expreſſed with much truth and deciſion. In ſome parts the water is ſtill and tranſparent as a mirror, but in that, which has been diſturbed by the chace, it is troubled, and ſtill ſhews ſome agitation. Notwithſtanding all theſe grand effects, the whole appearance of the picture is ſoft, calm, and almoſt of a gloomy hue. The ſhadows are dark and ſtrong, but the lights are vivid, and every object, even in the deepeſt ſhade, is diſcernible. The whole of this picture bears the marks of great facility of execution; it has nothing of manner in it, all is nature; and I am determined to copy ſome parts of it, even if it were to coſt me years of labour. M. Zing has engraved it; but he is ſo careful of his plates, that it is very difficult to get a ſight of them,

and

and ſtill more ſo to obtain an impreſſion. I will, however, try to get poſſeſſion of one for you.

What diſtinguiſhes Claude Lorraine is, in my opinion, his beautiful choice of nature in his pictures. Ruyſdael paints ruſtic nature juſt as he finds her: Claude chuſes thoſe parts which are moſt beautiful and engaging. His pictures are poetry in its pureſt ſtate; and I know no one beſides him, who is both painter and poet. The delightful repoſe, the animated colouring, the grand and ſimple ſtyle of compoſition, the magnificence of his ſubjects; the rich lawns overſpread with the moſt beautiful plants; the whole of nature ſo true, ſo pure, which ſprings to life under his pencil; every thing in ſhort in his works excites admiration and aſtoniſhment. Since I have learned to know them, I never walk in the country on a fine ſummer's evening without obſerving, on all the objects, the glowing tints of Claude Lorraine.

If I am not miſtaken, both the pictures I have mentioned have been engraved. They are each about four feet long by two feet high. One of them is a large lake, bordered with rocks which are adorned with the richeſt verdure. In the back ground a greyiſh mountain riſes from the water partly illuminated by the rays of the evening ſun, which is juſt going to diſappear. Some ſtreaks of light

light ſtill gild the feathery clouds, and ſparkle on the ſlightly agitated waves, the murmur of which ſeems to reach the ear. The figures are not ſo carefully painted as the other parts.

The other picture preſents nearly the ſame kind of ſky; it is, the fiery red of a ſetting ſun gradually receding into a quiet grey, which is indicative of heat. The ſummits of the mountains are loſt in the light vapour of the clouds: a ſtream, which winds round a little iſland, and which, whenever it appears, catches the beams of the ſun, forms the back-ground of the picture, with the addition of ſome architectural buildings, ſome fine trees, and a beautiful bridge. In the foreground, the rivulet widens and glides between the trees; the water is ſo tranſparent that you ſee the ſtones at the bottom of it, and the painter has carefully expreſſed all the reflections, which could be agreeable to the eye.

I believe, no painter was ever more thoroughly maſter of his art, or ſo capable of creating a ſtyle of nature ſo ſimple, and yet ſo poetical, as Claude.

There is a landſcape by Van Everdingen in this collection, which is of the ſame ſize, and in a ſimilar ſtyle to thoſe, which are in your poſſeſſion of this maſter. The ſky and the general ſcene are alſo

alſo nearly alike. It is a deep and gloomy valley, terminated by rocks, which encloſe a ſheet of clear and tranquil water, and through which ſome huntſmen are in purſuit of a ſtag. The moſt ſtriking part of this picture is, the grand ſtyle of the maſter, and the ſingular gift he poſſeſſes of expreſſing his ſubjects with ſlender materials; this is a ſecret which is almoſt excluſively his own; every object has its peculiar character, yet nothing is diſtinctly defined.

I cannot expreſs the delight I experience in viewing the beautiful works of Both and of Berghem. The mountains and water of the latter, in particular, have formed a ſtrong impreſſion on my mind; in other reſpects, I can ſcarcely ſay which of theſe two painters pleaſes me beſt; each excels in his own ſtyle. I intend to ſtudy ſelect parts of each, as much as I can, chuſing thoſe only which are moſt excellent; but I am convinced that theſe great painters improved their talents by ſtudying in the fields, not in their rooms.

I found ſtill more objects to excite my admiration in the hiſtorical line. I contemplated with aſtoniſhment the charming pictures of Rubens and his ſchool. Here are two large pictures by this maſter. A lion hunt, and a Bacchanalian feaſt. The gallery of Munich contains duplicates of theſe pic-

tures, and connoiſſeurs cannot agree which of the two poſſeſſes the originals. However, a few imperceptible faults, not likely to have been committed by Rubens, which only an artiſt can diſcover, and which are to be found in the pictures at Dreſden, ſeem to inſure the preference to thoſe at Munich. This queſtion is too difficult for me to attempt to decide, I therefore only attend to my feelings, which inſpire me with admiration for fine works. The purity, yet grandeur of deſign, the greatneſs of character, the fire and expreſſion of the figures, which are the ſize of life, in a word, all the richeſt ſtores of the art ſeem to be united in theſe pictures. After a cloſe examination of theſe grand hiſtorical conceptions, where every thing acts and ſpeaks to the eye, where all is full of animation and ſoul, how little and unintereſting do other works appear in competition with them! how flat and affected our modern compoſitions ſeem, after the ſublime creations of ſuch a genius as a Raphael, a Correggio, a Titian, or a Rubens!

There is here a little ſketch of the laſt judgment, which is in the gallery of Duſſeldorf; it is at moſt the fourth or ſixth part of the ſize of the picture. The figures are grouped in a very ſingular manner; they ſeem to be floating in the air with extreme lightneſs, yet are tumbling over each other. Every ſtroke of the pencil is expreſſive of the moſt rigid truth;

truth; there is not one too much or too little; and every one marks perfectly, juſt what it ought. It is evident, that it gave Rubens leſs trouble to draw figures, than others to form letters. This ſketch is painted with only two or three colours: the grandeur of the deſign, and the expreſſion, which pervades all the figures, gives ſo much ſtrength to the whole, that it produces an aſtoniſhing effect.

The prodigal ſon, by Jordans, a pupil of Rubens, is as large as life. The ſtyle is broad, grand, and well felt; each ſtroke of the pencil gives the drawing of a muſcle.

The two fineſt pictures of this whole collection, and which, perhaps, are ſcarcely obſerved by a hundredth part of thoſe who viſit the gallery, becauſe they are not ſo brilliant as ſome others, are, the Madona of Raphael, and the Night of Correggio. The noble ſimplicity and angelic innocence of the firſt of theſe ſurpaſs all deſcription. It is a figure of the ſize of life, graceful and majeſtic, and of a degree of beauty, which equals the antique. The colouring is rather too red, and this is a picture which requires conſiderable attention to excite all the admiration it deſerves. The object penetrates by degrees into your inmoſt ſoul, and then you find it impoſſible to deſcribe it in terms adequate to the ſenſations it excites.

I hope ſoon to be able to give you a leſs confuſed account of this gallery; at preſent, all is ſo new to me, and I have ſo much to ſee, that I can do nothing but look; I truſt, however, that I ſhall ſhortly employ my time in copying as well as looking.

I ſaw M. Klengel lately, who has made a beautiful drawing from one of your idyls. He deſires to be remembered to you. Adieu, my dear father. I am anxious to ſee ſome performance of your hand ſhortly; and perhaps you are this moment at Sihlwald employing your pencil on ſome beautiful landſcape.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER IX.

MAD. GESSNER TO HER SON.

Sihlwald, Auguſt 7, 1784.

YESTERDAY, my dear ſon, we arrived at Sihlwald. On entering the parlour, three ſmall pictures, painted by you, met my eyes. I paſſed ſome time in contemplating them. "It is now a year, thought I, ſince I ſaw him trace theſe pleaſing forms; he whiſtled and ſang, and I ſaw them grow under his pencil; now, he is far, far from us."—In ſhort, I had the weakneſs to preſs my lips on one of theſe pictures. You well know, my dear ſon, that I am not much addicted to ſcenes of a ſentimental turn; but to-day, while I conſider your works, in which I ſo plainly trace the fire of your imagination and the propriety of your taſte, I could not refrain from this little impulſe of maternal feelings. Do not, however, be apprehenſive, that the tender affection of a mother will ever lead me too far, or that I ſhall ſuffer my mind to be too powerfully impreſſed with the painful ſenſations, to which your abſence gives birth. My reaſon con-

vinces me, that it is for your welfare that you are now in a place, where your abilities will have opportunities of unfolding, and where you can become great in your art. Continue, my dear ſon, as you have begun. May every moment bear the mark of ſome improvement, and may your father's precepts ever be conſidered by you as oracles of wiſdom; they are the reſult of the experience he has collected not only of life, but of that art, which he has acquired ſimply by his own induſtry.

Sihlwald, Auguſt 30.

We have been ſome weeks at our beloved Sihlwald. Your father enjoys himſelf here as uſual in perfect liberty: he is here entirely for the ſake of his art, and he can conveniently avail himſelf of every opportunity, which offers, of ſtudying from nature. We have, however, ſuſtained a great loſs in the old ranger, who has now been dead ſome time: and we feel it very heavily in our walks as well as at our meals. We loved him like an old friend; his character was open and upright, and the practical experience he poſſeſſes of life, together with the gaiety and ſerenity with which he bore his years, all combined to make him dear to to us, and to unite our hearts in the trueſt bonds of friendſhip.

Your

Your father has painted a charming picture, ſince he has been here. You no doubt remember the view, which is oppoſite to our houſe. It is formed by a large rock, that riſes encircled by young trees and buſhes; the marſh, which lies near it, your father has converted into a fine fiſh-pond, in which ſome cows are refreſhing themſelves; a ſtream of water ſprings from the top of the rock falling in a caſcade to the bottom, and ſome female figures are ſeen walking in the little wood on one ſide; the trees almoſt appear to be growing, and there is in the whole compoſition a richneſs and variety, which ſurely none but a poet could give; it is, in my opinion, the beſt of his works.

Your brother and ſiſter enjoy, each in their own way, the beauties of the enchanting Sihlwald, for that is the appellation your brother has given it. Steinbruchel has been here ſome days; I reſign the pen, that you may have the pleaſure of receiving a few lines from him.

Your affectionate mother,

J. GESSNER.

LETTER X.

C. GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

Dreſden, September 5.

You tell me, my dear parents, that you are ſatisfied with my conduct. How flattering and encouraging to me is this idea! How ſenſibly I felt your aſſurances of the moſt conſtant and tender ſolicitude for my welfare, and the affectionate anxiety expreſſed by my excellent mother! Your letters were moiſtened with tears of joy, as were alſo the few lines ſent me by our dear Steinbruchel, which occaſioned me an agreeable ſurpriſe. I hope ſoon to have leiſure to thank him myſelf for the honour of his friendſhip, of the value of which I am fully ſenſible.

I begin to diſpoſe of my time ſo economically, that I think I can now give a tolerable account of myſelf. The proofs you give me of your ſatisfaction inſpire me with the wiſh to deſerve it more every day, by employing every moment to advantage. I will give you a ſketch of my daily occupations.

occupations. I begin by reading; then, after haſtily taking a diſh of coffee, I arrange my room, and employ myſelf in painting till the gallery opens. When I leave the latter, I go into the country to draw from nature, or return home to continue my painting. Now, that I am ſo fully aware of the importance of ſtudying from nature, how much I regret having neglected thoſe beauties, which Sihlwald and other delightful ſpots in my own country, daily preſented to my eyes.

I have made ſome ſketches in chalk, and a great number in colours; but the gallery has occupied ſo much of my time, that I have not yet been able to finiſh any. M. Graaf is of opinion, that it is uſeful to begin many things at once, and to finiſh them afterwards ſucceſſively. I find this an excellent method, for, by fixing the attention a long time on the ſame object, we often fall into a ſtyle quite different from that, which was at firſt intended. When the gallery cloſes, I ſhall have ſufficient leiſure to finiſh what I have begun.

My room is already entirely covered with my works. The firſt picture, I painted here, repreſents a cannon on its carriage, and near it ſome peaſants' horſes with their ſaddles and harneſs; the ſecond picture, four horſes drinking at a ciſtern, and ſome grooms ſtanding by them. Theſe two

are

are only ſketches, done very haſtily, but M. Graaf was ſo pleaſed with them, that he would not let me finiſh them more. I beſtowed more care and attention on a little view of a ſtable, in which, in a diſtant perſpective, another ſtable is diſtinguiſhable, filled with horſes like the firſt. The principal object is a white horſe, and near him is a groom preparing to put on his ſaddle; in the middle of the ſtable ſtands the officer, to whom the horſe belongs; the light comes from the door and falls on theſe three figures alone. I do not mention ſome other pictures, which are much in the ſame ſtyle, becauſe I wiſh to give you a deſcription of a moonlight. The landſcape of it is painted from nature; the moon, glittering through the trees, caſts her beams on a pond where ſome horſes have been bathing, and the trees are reflected in the water. A peaſant's cottage appears on a little ſandy hill. The ſky is dark and ſtormy, like thoſe which Ruyſdael was ſo fond of painting, but the cottage and hill have a ſtrong light thrown on them. I am painting at preſent another picture, in which the warmth of the ſetting-ſun is ſtill diſcernible behind the mountains, and gilds ſome clouds ſcattered over the ſky; in the diſtance, the eye loſes itſelf in the boſom of a dark valley: the middle of the ſcene preſents a foreſt, in which may be diſtinguiſhed a group of ſportſmen aſſembled round a large fire; and a ſkirmiſh between ſome huſſars, is ſeen through the

branches

branches of the oaks and fir-trees in the fore-ground.

I must confess, that hitherto I have passed my time in the gallery more in looking at the pictures than in copying them, for I think, that the greatest advantage, which perhaps I can derive from this establishment, is the opportunity of seeing so many fine works, of comparing them with nature, and then consigning the result of my observations either to canvas or to paper. All, that I have copied, amounts to nothing more than some horses, from Blomaert, and a group from Wouverman. I intend very shortly to begin some more copies; M. Graaf is not dissatisfied with what I have done; and he approves of the method, which I have just now mentioned.

M. Klengel has had the goodness to accompany me sometimes to the gallery, and I am indebted to him for having made me observe several things, which, without him, would probably have escaped my notice, or which I should not have felt or understood so well. He has made me almost adore Wouverman. With what a wonderful facility every thing is grouped and arranged, as if without any trouble in his compositions! The most insignificant objects are expressed with neatness and taste, yet they never appear to be the productions of

of minute labour. His figures and horſes poſſeſs all the delicacy of a miniature, yet are not wanting in fire and animation. I always feel very forcibly thoſe ſenſations, which he muſt himſelf have experienced, when compoſing his works; yet my admiration of this great maſter does not render me blind to the merit of other artiſts, who have purſued the ſame ſtyle. Borgognone probably ſurpaſſes him in correctneſs, and in point of deſign. Rugendas is, in my opinion, the Raphael of horſe painters; his are all in the ſame ſtyle, full of fire and character, and, abating only the fine colouring of Wouverman, I prefer them to the horſes in his pictures. Theſe, to be ſure, poſſeſs a great ſhare of grace and truth; but ſetting aſide the elegant touch and magical colouring of Wouverman, it muſt be acknowledged, that the horſes of Rugendas are drawn with more correctneſs and greater dignity. I have inſiſted ſo much the more on the obſervation, becauſe M. Klengel, whoſe knowledge has in other reſpects been of ſo much aſſiſtance to me, wiſhes to perſuade me to ſtudy Wouverman as my only model, even for the manner of painting horſes. I cannot, in this reſpect, conform to his opinion. Why ſhould I ſtudy Wouverman, or any one beſides, and not attend to nature, by which Wouverman himſelf formed his ſtyle? Why ſhould I undergo the ſlavery of copying his horſes perpetually, without being able to give them that inimitable grace,

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

grace, which his pencil alone could beſtow, and perhaps ſtill more incorrectly than he has drawn them? No, in this reſpect I will not copy any maſter excluſively, neither Wouverman, nor even Rugendas; I will endeavour to acquire, as much as I can, the grace of the one and the correctneſs of the other, and profit from them as guides to aſſiſt me in diſcovering the beſt models in nature. I leave to thoſe, who copy by profeſſion, that ſcrupulous exactneſs, and the ambition to imitate, even the faults of their original. In my mind he only deſerves the name of a painter, who makes nature his great model, and attends to the impulſe of thoſe feelings, which are characteriſtically his own.

Moſt artiſts appear to me to be guilty of one common error, which is, that of forming a ſort of arbitrary theory, which they adopt in their works, and which often ſeduces them from the truth of nature. This fault certainly cannot be attributed to Wouverman. He may be ſaid to be free from art. His clouds are not geometrically carved into pyramids or other regular forms; his figures are grouped, as if by accident, and not arranged by the ſide of each other according to the priſmatic order of colours. Generally ſpeaking, I have never obſerved a ſtriking contraſt of colours in nature; all the tints are harmonized by an airy vapour and ſoftly blended together as we ſee in the pictures of Ruyſdael,

Ruysdael, of Claude Lorraine, and of Wouverman. How different from this is the usual system of landscape painters, who begin with a resplendent sky streaming with yellow and blue, then some beautiful blue mountains finely melting into grey; from grey to green, thus following every gradation of colour till they reach a fine coffee brown! and this is called harmony, and is the receipt to make a picture! You might suppose, after seeing one of this description, that they do not understand any other harmony than that of their pallet; or that their eyes can distinguish nothing but that false brilliancy, which in fact some artists have offered them as a model. A person must be totally dead to all feeling, not to observe in nature what a truly good picture represents. I am not surprised to meet with artists, who, after having tired themselves, as they describe it, in running after nature, at last stumble in the road, and overlook some of her most striking beauties; while others perhaps, who observe her, like painters, and contemplate every scene as a picture, draw some advantage from every object which presents itself.

I cannot help smiling, when I see the crowd of connoisseurs and critics, who visit the gallery, examining the pictures with such an air of gravity and importance, yet passing by those of Raphael and Correggio without deigning to cast a glance on them,

and

and ſtopping with the greateſt admiration before ſome dazzling picture. Theſe gentlemen are the more ready to praiſe and condemn, becauſe they are ſo little capable themſelves of executing any thing that is worthy of praiſe; and they deal out their opinions with more arrogance in proportion as they are leſs qualified to criticiſe. The hiſtory of artiſts in general proves but too ſtrongly how much they injure true taſte, and how often they fetter the development of unvitiated talent.

M. Graaf is returned from Carlſbad; and we may now ſhortly expect from his hand a ſucceſſion of fine pictures. He ranks among the ſmall number of modern artiſts, who repreſent nature as they find her, without affectation and without falſe decorations. If, by chance, he finds himſelf obliged to uſe a little flattery in a portrait, a man, who, like him, poſſeſſes true genius, will ſhew it even in the performance of this unthankful taſk; but where he is not fettered by neceſſity, nature and the graces ſeem to guide his pencil. Among thoſe of his works which are moſt deſerving of this commendation, I conſider the portrait he has painted of Sulzer, holding his grandſon on his knee, and his large family picture, as moſt worthy of praiſe. In the latter he has painted himſelf, leaning on a chair, and contemplating the portrait of his father-in-law, which he has juſt finiſhed. His wife, ſeated by his ſide, gives him

him a ſmile of approbation; one of his ſons is ſitting on a ſtool, and drawing, while the other is playing at his father's feet. The figures are as large as life, and the reſemblance very ſtriking. The drawing is pure and correct, and the whole picture is painted with as much care as taſte.'

I lately met profeſſor Ebert of Brunſwick in the gallery. He does not forget the pleaſure he once experienced of perſonally knowing you, and he deſired me to ſay for him many kind and civil things to you.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XI.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Sihlwald, 5th September.

I ASSURE you, my dear ſon, that your laſt letter, as well as thoſe which preceded it, gave us inexpreſſible pleaſure. Your letters are the true picture of your mind. We diſcover in them both the man and the artiſt, and we are equally ſatisfied with each. Such marks of approbation I know might be dangerous to many others; but you, I am perſuaded, will only conſider them as incentives to perſevere in the proper road you have had the good ſenſe to chooſe, and to follow it with increaſed ardour and ſpirit.

Steinbrüchel and your uncle were much pleaſed with the tender and reſpectful ſentiments you expreſs towards them on the ſubject of their writing to you. They both eſteem you as a beloved ſon, and entertain great expectations of your abilities. Do not, however, encourage too ardent a wiſh to ſee them again. If God grants us life, you will

enjoy that pleaſure in the courſe of ſome years; and years, which are dedicated to occupations that are dear to us, and ſtudies that are purſued with enthuſiaſm, will paſs away but too rapidly.

I am perfectly ſatisfied with the diſtribution of your time, and the plan you have laid down for purſuing your ſtudies. I recommend to you, above all things, to make it your principal object to become familiarly acquainted with all the beſt examples of good painting, which the gallery affords. I do not mean by this, to adviſe the ſervile labour of a copyiſt; indeed your ſentiments on that ſubject perfectly correſpond with mine. The copyiſt, deprived of the animating ſtimulus of imagination, is obliged to tread with tedious exactneſs in the footſteps of his models. He is their ſlave, even when he wiſhes to do juſtice to his own ideas, and he will always remain below thoſe whom he imitates, becauſe he works without inſpiration, without fire, and neither dares to think nor to act from the impulſe of his own mind. I approve extremely of the rule, you intend to obſerve, of ſeeking in nature as much as poſſible for the originals of thoſe objects, which are preſented to you by art, and of comparing them with each other. When you are become familiar with the form and character of objects, you will never be led aſtray by any ſtyle; and you will adopt that only which will appear to

you

you the beſt choſen, and moſt appropriate to the ſubject. Endeavour alſo to diſtinguiſh in each maſter thoſe parts, in which he moſt excelled, and ſtudy them with attention, until you have acquired perfect facility in the execution of them. It will frequently happen to you, even in your own works, to meet with difficulties, which will ſtop your progreſs. Obſerve thoroughly thoſe objects, which are the cauſe of them; ſearch both in nature and in works of art for ſuch as are analogous, and ſtudy them without intermiſſion, that you may thus combat with every difficulty, till you have overcome all that may ariſe.

You tell me, that in your drawings from nature, you endeavour not to fall into a ſtiff and finiſhed ſtyle. I think you are perfectly right. Your drawings ſhould be a faithful repreſentation of every object, and they muſt be modified according to the nature of each. Exactneſs of imitation is too often ſacrificed to compoſition. Endeavour as much as poſſible to unite them both, but be careful never to neglect that moſt eſſential point, of procuring in each object the truth and variety of its character, for any attainment of an inferior magnitude.

I am delighted, that Meſſrs. Graaf and Zing think you may, with credit to yourſelf, add ſomething to the exhibition of pictures, which is ſhortly

to open. Exert yourſelf to the utmoſt of your power, my dear ſon, that you may even ſurpaſs their expectations. If you ſhould be ſo fortunate on your firſt appearance in public as to attract the attention of connoiſſeurs, you may hereafter find it an advantage of the greateſt importance to you.

The ſeaſon for drawing landſcapes from nature will now ſoon be over, and I ſhould then adviſe you to apply more particularly to the ſtudy of the human figure, and I muſt again repeat to you not to neglect anatomy, as you will always find it of the moſt eſſential ſervice. You will doubtleſs be able to procure plaſter figures either at Dreſden or at Leipſic, beſides which, you may, even in winter, do ſomething from nature. You know I have always lying about my room a little collection of fragments of rocks, well ſelected, from which I draw, and I have found much advantage from this method. I would adviſe you alſo, to copy a head occaſionally, and particularly hands, from Graaf. You ſhould ſtudy theſe parts with care; they are the moſt difficult, and too often neglected by painters.

What degree of proficiency have you acquired in the ſtudy of horſes? Have you opportunities of ſketching from the beſt models of this kind, either in

in the Elector's ſtud, in the riding-ſchool, or elſewhere? If it ſhould occaſion you ſome expenſe to procure ſuch opportunities, do not be diſcouraged on that account. I dare ſay you will alſo find opportunities of ſtudying the anatomy of horſes at Rumpelts.

I am very glad that your friend Feer is to paſs the winter with you. This is a circumſtance, which is likely to be of great ſervice to you both. Endeavour to profit from it with regard to architecture, and eſpecially in the ſtudy of perſpective. Pray make my affectionate regards to him.

I cannot expreſs how much both your mother and myſelf are pleaſed with the friendſhip, which M. and Mad. Graaf evince towards you. I need not point out to you the benefits reſulting from it; I therefore intreat you to do all in your power to render yourſelf every day more worthy of it.

A perſon, who is lately arrived from Rome, told me, that Trippel, the ſculptor, was preparing to ſet off for Dreſden, and that probably he is there by this time. Loſe not a ſingle day in going to ſee this worthy man. He is equally reſpectable as a man and as an artiſt. Uniting intenſe application with great natural abilities, he has rendered himſelf maſter of all, that is great and ſublime, both

among the ancients and moderns. If you see him, assure him of my sincere affection and most unfeigned respect. Endeavour also to gain his friendship, for you may derive from it the greatest advantages. I am told, that he is to be appointed inspector of the antique collection at Dresden; if that should be the case, you would not only be enabled to gain free access to it, but also to study the antique under his direction. Such a combination of fortunate circumstances uniting in your favour, should encourage you to exert yourself as much as possible. We have enjoyed seven weeks of uninterrupted fine weather at Sihlwald, and have had frequent visits from our friends, particularly Steinbrüchel. During this time, I have painted four pictures, and my health is considerably better than it was a year ago. Farewell, my dear son. May Heaven preserve you. Remember me to all our friends. I am, with true parental affection,

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XII.

MAD. GESSNER TO HER SON.

Sihlwald, 5th Sept. 1784.

I could not tell you better than your father has done, my dear ſon, how perfectly we are ſatisfied with your conduct. No, ſurely, I could not, for his pen alone can deſcribe with fidelity the ſoft emotions of tenderneſs and joy; and, even were I able to expreſs them better than he can, I would not cauſe your tears to flow again as I did before, by expoſing my moſt tender feelings. It does honour to your heart to bear ſo ſtrong an affection to your mother; yet never ſuffer that love for your parents, which is ſo faithfully repaid by them, to become ſo powerful in your boſom as to abſorb all other ſentiments. Had you remained at home and been habituated, under your mother's auſpices, to employments merely domeſtic, what advantage would you have acquired? I own we ſhould have paſſed ſome delightful winter evenings together; but your love for the arts, which is ſo deeply engraven on your

mind, and my ambition to ſee my ſons as much diſtinguiſhed for their talents as for their virtues, would have been a conſtant ſource of regret at your paſſing your time in a manner ſo little worthy of you.

This ſummer has glided away very pleaſantly at Sihlwald, and I have enjoyed very good health the greateſt part of the time; your father has been perfectly well, and you know this ſpot becomes quite an Arcadia, when he animates us by his pleaſing vivacity. The day of our arrival was, as is uſual, quite a treat for us, as well as for the ranger's family. The affection and cordiality, which ſubſiſts among theſe worthy people, give a higher reliſh to all our meals; and ſome tears will be ſhed, when we leave them, which muſt now be very ſhortly. The ranger's ſon is grown a great ſtout boy; whenever your father goes out on horſe-back, he never fails to jump up behind him; and as your brother is not much diſpoſed to reſign his ſhare in theſe excurſions, if he cannot procure a horſe, he bravely trudges on foot through hedges and ditches by his father's ſide. Our friends frequently come to viſit us, and always inquire after you in the kindeſt manner.

You are, no doubt, returned from the picturesque excurſion you were to make with M. Zing.

I beg

I beg you will relate your adventures to us. Whether you have been converted into a champion or into a theatrical hero, you will always pleaſe us. We were much entertained with the comical deſcription of your firſt journey; do not loſe your good ſpirits, my child: your letters are always a delightful amuſement both to your father and me.

Steinbrüchel expreſſes much ſatisfaction at the taſte you evince for reading. To think rightly and expreſs your ideas with facility, are certainly two invaluable acquirements, and as neceſſary to an artiſt as to any one elſe; and I doubt whether they can be attained, even with the beſt abilities, without the aſſiſtance, which the peruſal of good and uſeful works will afford. What a treaſure of images, either of the ſublime or of the cheerful kind, is to be found in the beſt works of the ancients! Steinbrüchel recommends them to you particularly, although you cannot read them in the original. The ſtudy of the ancient authors is, in his opinion, abſolutely neceſſary to an artiſt, in order that he may imbibe a true ſenſe of the grand and the beautiful, and that he may introduce into his compoſitions every thing that is noble and intereſting. He adviſes you alſo to read the beſt hiſtorical authors, ſuch as Xenophon, Livy, and Tacitus. The habit of viewing grand objects gives elevation to the ſoul, and inſpires it with a noble emulation

to

to give birth to great productions. Adieu, my dear ſon; may God bleſs and preſerve you, is the never ceaſing prayer of your very affectionate mother,

J. GESSNER.

LETTER XIII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

My dear Parents! Dreſden, 10th October.

How much pleaſure have your letters afforded me! What a delightful deſcription you give of your ſweet Sihlwald, and of the life you lead there; it would really grace the golden age! I cannot expreſs all the ſentiments, which aroſe on reading it; and our worthy Steinbrüchel too! Aſſure him, that his affectionate advice will not be loſt upon me, and that I ſhall ever receive it as I ſhould the counſel of an enlightened and beloved parent.

To be ſure our ſecond expedition has been as fertile in adventures as our firſt, and in grand adventures too; for they might have carried us, though much againſt our will, as far as Prague. I will give you a true and faithful account of them.

We had bent our courſe to the mountains, which extend towards the frontiers of Bohemia.

At Frauenſtern we ſtopped at the houſe of the grand-bailiff, who received us in the moſt hoſpitable and obliging manner. It is to you, my dear father, that we owe this polite reception. Our hoſt told us, that he eſteemed himſelf fortunate in having it in his power to give us a ſlight proof of his gratitude, for all the pleaſure which he had experienced from your writings. In fact, he evinced ſuch true happineſs in ſeeing us, and treated us with ſo much kindneſs, that we could have no doubts of his ſincerity: and we conſidered ourſelves quite at home in his houſe. When we left him, he charged us to remember him to you. Now comes the hiſtory of our misfortunes.

After quitting Frauenſtern, we continued our route, till we reached a village, ſituated cloſe to the frontiers of Bohemia, the picturesque appearance of which, inclined us to ſtop at it. Our party conſiſted, as in the former expedition, of Oeſer, Troll, Zing, and myſelf. The weather was now beginning to be very cold; we quitted the village one fine morning, leaving M. Zing behind, with the intention of taking a walk to the frontier. From the eminence where we were, and from which there is the moſt beautiful view in the world, we deſcended to the firſt Bohemian village. When we arrived, the overſeer of the pariſh ſent us to the alehouſe, whither we went; but when we were about to depart,

we

we ſaw the ſame overſeer make his appearance, and, to our great ſurpriſe, he arreſted us as priſoners. A guard, armed with pikes and halberts, conducted us to his houſe, where we remained for ſome hours, not knowing what they intended doing to us; then a freſh reinforcement of ſoldiers, with terrific whiſkers and crabbed faces arrived, and threatened to load us with irons; after a ſpace of time, which to us had appeared quite long enough, we ſet out under a good eſcort, to be conducted to the neareſt officer of the frontier.

As we went along we ſerved as a ſight to the inhabitants of the places through which we paſſed; and, as I conclude, I was conſidered as the moſt active of the party, I had always a guard cloſe to my ſide, who held my coat for fear I ſhould make my eſcape. At length we arrived at the officer's houſe. We had ſtill to endure a tedious ſtate of ſuſpenſe in a room full of ſoldiers, who did not ſpare us in their witticiſms. Oeſer could not help ſhewing ſome degree of uneaſineſs, which only ſerved to increaſe the ſuſpicions that were already entertained of us all. For my part, I quietly ſmoked my pipe and waited the event with perfect indifference. During this interval we underwent an examination from the officer's wife. As ſhe appeared to be very familiar with the ſoldiers, we at firſt ſuppoſed her to be a ſervant, and did not much regard her: but ſhe, placing her arms by her ſide,

with

with an authoritative voice made us underſtand the reſpect, which ſhe conſidered due to her; and declared that her huſband, the lieutenant, did not chooſe to be trifled with; and that, whoever amongſt our party could not produce a paſſport, were he even a noble of the empire, ſhould, without fail, be ſent to Prague. The ſoldiers confirmed this menace; and I confeſs, that at that moment the ſum total of our courage did not amount to much.

At length the lieutenant, who, during this time, had been employed in catching birds in nets, returned from his important expedition. He made his appearance in a torn coat, and equipped in a ſtyle more calculated to excite pity than command reſpect. Nevertheleſs his preſence ſtill increaſed our fears. He contemptuouſly viewed us from head to foot, and gave no further order reſpecting us, than to have us reconducted to the alehouſe, becauſe he wanted his dinner. Some time afterwards, we were again ſummoned to appear before him. This time he made his entrance in a gala dreſs, and followed by a retinue which was compoſed of our accuſer the overſeer, and ſome corporals. Then began the examination. We were brought up ſeparately, and were interrogated according to due form and order. I ſpoke firſt, and the lieutenant, who was then tolerably polite, appeared to be ſatisfied with my anſwers. He nevertheleſs inquired

quired very carefully if we had not any pencils or paper with us, and we were obliged to submit to a very rigorous search, which was made for this purpose. Fortunately they did not find any, for had they discovered the slightest trace of such materials, we should have been dispatched, without hope of mercy, to the fortress of Prague, as engineers employed as spies. After all this ceremony we were set at liberty, and the guard reconducted us to the frontier.

Troll had supposed, that, by telling my name and making myself known to be your son, the whole business would soon be terminated; but alas! the lieutenant had never heard of Idylls. Indeed I think that by using that word he imagined you to be some doctor, for he asked what sort of drug these *pills of Geßner* were?* At length, after all the mischances of this day, we returned at a late hour to our former quarters, where we found *M.* Zing waiting for us with no little anxiety. This was the boundary of our excursions. We returned to Dresden laden with riches, and well satisfied with our journey, which was extremely pleasant in every respect, excepting only the circumstance which I have related to you.

* The termination of the words *Idylles* and *Pillen* in German, being so similar, renders the lieutenant's mistake more easily comprehended.

The

The gallery is no longer open to the public, but I have ſtill permiſſion to viſit it. During the laſt month they have began drawing from life in the academy. This ſtudy is continued every evening, from five o'clock till ſeven, and they draw from one attitude for the whole week. The model is a tall well-made lad, who was ſelected from among the cavalry belonging to the life-guards. There are four profeſſors at the academy: Caſanova, Schönau, Camerata, and Canale. Each preſides during one month. Caſanova is an excellent draughtſman, and teaches with much perſpicuity. I applied to him to obtain permiſſion to be preſent at the ſittings; he at firſt made ſome objections, but I kept my ground and preſſed him ſo much, that at laſt he granted my requeſt. He did not appear diſpleaſed with my perſeverance, and hitherto he ſeems to be ſatisfied with my attempts. At firſt, I found myſelf rather awkward in this kind of work; but now it grows every day more eaſy; the clouds diſperſe by degrees, and I begin to find myſelf at home.

I am perfectly aware, that anatomy, and particularly that part, which relates to the bones, is the very ſoul of painting, and I am not entirely ſatisfied with a figure, unleſs I ſee the ſkeleton indicated with truth and ſcience; yet, at the ſame time, without being hard; for it is a great error to ſuppoſe it a proof of talent, when the eye is aſſailed by figures well

well furniſhed with a multitude of projecting bones, which moſt commonly do not exiſt in nature, and which the painter has placed there, though ignorant of the uſe to which they can be applied; although it is very certain, that there is not one in the human body which has not its peculiar deſtination and functions. It therefore appears to me, in order to avoid blunders of this nature, that it is abſolutely neceſſary to have an exact knowledge of the ſtructure of the bones. For my part, that I may ſee the way before me, I cannot be ſatisfied unleſs I can form an idea to myſelf of the bone under the fleſh; and when I have drawn with attention the bones of an arm, of a leg, or any other part, I immediately catch the grace and motion of it.

LETTER XIV.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, Oct. 20, 1784.

I RECEIVED your delightful landſcape, juſt as I was going to ſeal my letter. When I viewed it, and found by your letter that this charming preſent was deſtined for me, the tranſports of my joy almoſt deprived me of my ſenſes. Indeed, it is too much, my beloved, my excellent father! I ſhall never merit ſo much kindneſs. Your letters and your approbation were already a ſufficient encouragement to me to proceed. But now you have added a preſent of ſuch great value, it is too much! indeed it is too much at once! and I feel, that I ſhall never have courage to ſend you any of my works.

When I was a little recovered from my ecſtacy, I flew to M. Graaf, that he might partake of my joy; the reſt of the day was quite a holiday for the whole family. I have now hung up your landſcape in my chamber, and every morning I haſten out

out of bed to go and contemplate it; each time I ſee it with freſh raptute, and then I think of you, of my home, and am half tempted to return to you.

The artiſts, to whom I have ſhown it, are perfectly ſatisfied with it, and do not perceive any thing that could be amended. M. Graaf and Klengel, alone, would have wiſhed, that the little wood in the back-ground had been of a tone of colour rather leſs uniform, and inclining more to a grey tint. Zing, for his part, wiſhes, that one of the trees, which are in the foreground, had a little more ſubſtance.

As for me, I muſt honeſtly confeſs, that I cannot diſcover any fault in it. Every thing is beautiful, every thing is true as nature. Since this picture has been in my poſſeſſion, I can do nothing but ſhow it to every one, thank you for it a thouſand and a thouſand times, and excite myſelf to redouble my zeal and my efforts to improve, that I may prove my gratitude to you in future, better than I can at preſent.

Conceive the embarraſſing ſituation, in which my brother and I were placed yeſterday. We were at M. O——, and there was a large party. On a ſudden, dancing was propoſed, and, unfortu-

nately, they would inſiſt upon our dancing alſo. We excuſed ourſelves as well as we could, but they would not liſten to us, and all our proteſtations were uſeleſs. Fehr quietly took his hat and cane, and ſlipped away without being perceived; but I, finding I could not follow his example, entered the liſts with a good grace, and I danced a valſe with the miſtreſs of the houſe ſo well and ſo dexterouſly, that, from that moment, my reſt and tranquillity were ſecure for the remainder of the evening.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XV.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Nov. 4, 1784.

YOUR letters, my dear ſon, were moſt welcome, and they gave us ſo much the more pleaſure, as we had been in expectation of them for nearly fourteen weeks. Your mother began to be ſeriouſly alarmed at your ſilence. Why did you not ſend off your firſt letter? All then would have been right. You expreſs ſuch tender ſentiments on the pleaſure, which our letters occaſion you; yet you do not conſider, that, if you write to us more frequently, you will receive anſwers proportionally often.

The artleſſneſs of your joy, and the tenfold multitude of your thanks for the landſcape, I gave you, excited our laughter, yet at the ſame time gave riſe to the moſt tender feelings. May this picture be conſidered by you, my ſon, as a mark of our affection, and of our approbation of your conduct. May Heaven bleſs your good reſolutions!

You ſpeak of them with a degree of ſpirit which proves, that your mind is wholly abſorbed by the ideas you expreſs. Yes, I muſt repeat it, we are perfectly ſatisfied, my child, with you; be aſſured of our affection; for we expect, with implicit confidence, every thing, that may be hoped for, from your zeal and your ſentiments.

I am well pleaſed with the ſucceſs my landſcape has met with at Dreſden, and not leſs ſo with your frankneſs in reporting to me the criticiſms made on it by the connoiſſeurs. The little wood in the back ground, was at firſt of a greyiſh tone; I afterwards thought, that a browner tint would give more harmony to the whole; but, perhaps I have heightened it too much. If I had the picture in my poſſeſſion, I could correct this error in a quarter of an hour. In other reſpects, M. Wüſt, whom I conſult on all my works, did not remark any of the faults you mention, which induces me to hope they are not very ſtriking. I am delighted, that M. Günter ſhould have formed the idea of engraving this landſcape, and, if he executes it, I ſincerely wiſh that he may find it an advantageous work. Pray aſſure this ingenious artiſt of my eſteem and regard. We laughed moſt heartily at the recital of your adventure on the frontiers of Bohemia. I remarked with much pleaſure the firmneſs which you diſplayed on the occaſion, as well

well as that, which you oppoſed to the difficulties advanced by the profeſſors at the academy. This quality is a valuable ingredient in the character of a man, whoſe deſtiny cannot lead him to paſs his days in his own chimney corner. We were not leſs entertained with your embarraſſment at Mad. O——'s. The manner, in which both you and Fehr extricated yourſelves from your difficulties, is perfectly characteriſtic of each. Fehr with his ſolemn gravity takes his hat and cane, and retires without being noticed; but you, with your thoughtleſs vivacity, brave the danger at once without fear. Tell Fehr, that I thank him moſt cordially for the leſſons he gives you in perſpective; endeavour to profit from them as much as poſſible. You will be ſurpriſed, when you find how indiſpenſable is the knowledge of this ſcience.

The pleaſure and zeal, which you ſhow in your ſtudies at the academy, and alſo the manner in which you ſpeak of this mode of exerciſing your art, give me great ſatisfaction. If you continue thus, I flatter myſelf, that by next ſpring you will have made conſiderable progreſs.

I wiſh you all poſſible ſucceſs at the approaching exhibition of pictures. Send me ſomething ſoon, that I may feel a pride in ſhowing it to our friends. Freudweiler has been returned ſome weeks; when-

ever he comes to ſee us, we talk of nothing but you, and we queſtion him about every thing that concerns you, from your hat to your ſhoe-buckles. Like the Bohemian lieutenant we have omitted only one interrogation in our liſt, which is, whether you are married? But let us proceed to the moſt eſſential point. So you have no more money, poor boy! Then let me conſole you by informing you, that forty old Louis-d'ors are on their journey to pay you a viſit: your mother will tell you the reſt.

If, after the exhibition, you can ſend us one of your pictures, let it be ſomething, by which I can judge of your progreſs in what may be called true landſcape.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XVI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, Jan. 9, 1785.

I AM expecting the time for the exhibition with impatience, yet with fear. I have already finiſhed with much attention ſeveral pictures on wood, and I intend to exhibit two of them. One repreſents an evening twilight. The centre of the ſcene is a little hill riſing from a wood, on which is placed a ſutler's cottage; a group of dragoons on horſeback are ſtopping before it, and are in the act of being ſerved with refreſhments. All the objects are in ſhadow, excepting a white horſe, which is the principal figure. In the diſtance, which gradually recedes into total obſcurity, a camp is ſtill diſcernible, and the wood may be diſtinguiſhed through the ſmoke, which riſes from the cottage. The ſecond picture repreſents a forge. It is in a tent raiſed under the ſhade of an oak, in which ſome horſes are being ſhod. The principal object in this, as in the laſt picture, is a white horſe, held by a young lad: farther on, ſome horſes

are

are placed in a group. I have drawn each attitude from nature, and the execution has coſt me a great deal of labour. My wiſh is, to finiſh my works with care, without entering into a minute exactneſs; for I begin to perceive, that painting ſketches is not ſufficient.

As I ſhould be apprehenſive, that theſe ſmall pictures would loſe much of their effect amongſt others of more conſiderable dimenſions, I propoſe painting ſome of a larger ſize, and a more ſtriking effect, which I ſketched ſome time ſince. One repreſents an open grove of oaks, on which the ſun forms various effects by ſhining between the branches. The ſtrongeſt light is thrown on the middle of the picture, where a trunk of a tree is particularly diſtinguiſhed by a ſtrong light. Near this trunk, a detachment of huſſars is filing off through a cloud of duſt. In the diſtance is ſeen a large ſandy plain, and ſome columns of cavalry on the march; the ſky is gloomy, and the wood is mingled with the clouds in a blackiſh tint; a few gleams of light pierce through the foliage and illumine ſome trunks of trees and ſome ſandy hillocks, which are ſcattered about the compoſition. In the other picture, ſome huſſars are coming out of a wood, partly enveloped in duſt: behind them another detachment of cavalry is approaching, and all appear to be advancing towards a ſkirmiſh, which is

ſeen

ſeen in the diſtance. The foreground is ſtrewed with branches of trees and broken chevaux-de-friſe; which is to indicate, that this ſpot has been occupied by a camp of infantry; ſeveral other objects are indiſtinctly perceived through the cloud of ſmoke and duſt. Theſe, my dear father, are the pictures, which I propoſe to exhibit; perhaps I may alſo add a drawing. I am much indebted to Meſſrs. Graaf and Zing, whoſe kind encouragements have ſupported me through my labours. I am, at preſent, ſtudying landſcape with great aſſiduity, and, I may ſay, without vanity, that I am every day more ſenſible of the advantages I have derived from my remarks on the gallery and from my ſtudies from nature. I confeſs, that it is very humiliating to a young artiſt to compare the work he has juſt finiſhed, with nature, or with the beſt productions of a great maſter; and indeed, I believe there are very few, who have the courage to make this compariſon. It is a difficult pill to ſwallow; but as far as I can judge by myſelf, its effects are wonderful.

Wouverman always retains, in my opinion, a ſuperiority over all other maſters. What I ſaid of him in one of my former letters appears to me every day more accurate, as I become more familiar with his productions. His ſkies, his trees, and, above all, the beautiful variety of his ground; all, in ſhort, is nature, and I have never yet ſeen any

picture

picture of his, in which the effect of the principal figure was leſſened by the attention he always gives to the details No ne has yet ſurpaſſed him in all theſe parts. Borgognone himſelf, great as he is in his compoſitions, in which he has repreſented, with ſo much fire and energy, all the ferocity and horror of a battle, yet loſes his claim, by the ſide of Wouverman, if they be each conſidered as imitators of nature. With the former, as indeed with ſome other great maſters, every thing is ſubordinate to compoſition and effect; but Wouverman knows how to combine the grander beauties of a whole with an exquiſite feeling of the inferior charms of detail. In his works every thing, even the ſmalleſt trifle, is perfect; he knows how to expreſs and finiſh thoſe objects, which others ſeem to feel only in a maſs, and to indicate in the general manner in which they feel them. An artiſt, whoſe taſte is well formed, never fills his pictures with too great a number of acceſſory objects, which would bewilder the eye of the ſpectator and lead it from the principal one. This, too, is one of Wouverman's great merits; his compoſition is always entire; he reſerves for the principal figure the moſt finiſhed execution, and the ſtrongeſt effect of light; the reſt is in a more calm and retired tint, and the back-ground is almoſt indiſtinct; ſo that the eye is naturally led to the moſt prominent figure, and repoſes on that without any effort.

 I feel,

I feel, my reſpected father, that I am now entering on the moſt important part of my life; I never felt before as I feel at preſent. My whole ſoul is abſorbed in my art; it is the only ſubject of my thoughts, the ſole ſource of all my feelings; my exiſtence, my actions, even my dreams, all are ſubſervient to this only object. How much I feel my courage and my ardour increaſed by the ſatisfaction you expreſs towards me, and by the kind manner in which you encourage me to purſue my ſtudies with unabated zeal! Continue to excite my aſſiduity by your counſel; you know, that it is my oracle; and if I ſhould myſelf occaſionally perceive ſome viſible progreſs, how ſtrong an incitement to proceed in my endeavours would it prove!

I continue to attend punctually all the ſittings at the academy, and not an evening paſſes, that I do not ſpend a part of it there. I ſend you ſome of my drawings from the model, which will ſhow you that I am not very far advanced. But I promiſe to do ſomething better very ſhortly; at leaſt I will not neglect any means that may be conducive to my improvement.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XVII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Feb. 5, 1785.

We have received both your letters and your drawings, my dear ſon. Many of your friends have ſeen the latter, and think, with me, that you have made conſiderable progreſs. Your ſtudies from nature are ſketched with ſpirit, and expreſs well, in large forms, the character of the object. They are however deſirous, that the details ſhould in ſome caſes be more made out. I wiſh, that a ſingle branch well-diſpoſed, or a tree drawn on a larger ſcale with exactneſs, ſhould denote the peculiar character of the different kinds of trees in your drawings; I ſhould like to ſee the intricate branches of the oak, the horizontal umbrage of the beech, &c. By this means you would accuſtom your imagination to retrace only ſuch forms as are true; and it will daily become more eaſy to you to recollect each abſent object as diſtinctly as if it were before your eyes. I know ſome painters, who, having acquired the habit of drawing the outlines of objects in a ſuperficial and negligent

negligent manner in their ſtudies from nature, have by degrees ſtrayed from truth, and have degenerated into manneriſts, merely becauſe they have not the faculty of retracing forms in their minds with ſufficient preciſion.

Landolt is very well ſatisfied with your horſes; we think them drawn boldly and with firmneſs, and the anatomical details are indicated with much accuracy. I have before aſked you, if you had the means of ſtudying the beſt models in this ſtyle; do all that lies in your own power to procure them, even if it ſhould occaſion you ſome expenſe. Have you free acceſs to the riding ſchool, and to the elector's ſtud? You have, no doubt, opportunities of ſeeing many things worthy of obſervation at M. Rumpelt's, but particularly, I imagine, in ſubjects relating to anatomy.

I am delighted with your admiration of Wouverman. Your enthuſiaſm in ſpeaking of his works, and your manner of judging of them, prove, that you ſtudy them with intelligence and with taſte. He is equally great in compoſition and in execution; but with regard to the form and character of objects, you muſt always have recourſe to nature for the beſt models. Borgognone is alſo a great painter; but in conſequence of his facility in grouping his objects, he often produces, without any

any great effort of mind, effects which ſtrike the eye at firſt ſight, but which loſe conſiderably on a nearer examination. He ſeems to have thought, that, in order to be faithful to the character of his ſtyle, it was neceſſary to daſh about with his colours and his pencils, and be as violent with the canvas, as his figures are in battle.

I much applaud your zeal in drawing figures; the ſketches you ſent me far ſurpaſſed my expectations. Continue always with the ſame degree of ardour, and reflect frequently on the pleaſure you will experience, when you have thoroughly attained a facility of drawing at once, whatever attitude you may wiſh to repreſent. The conſtant ſtudy of anatomy will be of the greateſt aſſiſtance to you. I have already remarked the effects of it in your academy figures, in which you have indicated, with conſiderable exactneſs, different parts which could not have been ſo apparent in the model. Theſe exerciſes will accuſtom you to accuracy and preciſion in the form; but beauty is of a very different nature, and you will learn that from the antique. Could not you get ſufficiently acquainted with M. Caſanova, as to procure the advantage of going to ſee the antique ſtatues with him? I ſhould feel highly grateful for ſuch a favour, particularly after Mengs's collection of caſts is arrived at Dreſden; which, according to the advertiſement in the annals

of

of the fine arts will be in a ſhort time. I have already told you, that if an introductory letter from me can be uſeful to you in obtaining any acquaintance you may wiſh, my pen is always at your commands.

I muſt communicate to you an obſervation, which I have made on your figures: the knees, in my opinion, ever have been, and are ſtill, the part in which you are moſt unſucceſsful. Remember the rule which I once gave you; always obſerve what parts in your drawings give you the moſt trouble, and endeavour to fix your attention particularly on the object of your difficulty, until, by continual labour and ſtudy, you have entirely overcome it. I adviſe you alſo to ſtudy with attention the fineſt forms in heads, even in the battle ſtyle, for ſomething more is wanted than merely ferocious countenances. You will, no doubt, be deſirous alſo, like Wouverman, of delineating ſcenes of a ſofter nature. What, for example, can be more pleaſing than his pictures of the repoſe after the chace, or the return of the hunters? And for this ſtyle of painting it is neceſſary to employ agreeable figures. You will do right, for various reaſons, to reflect on this piece of advice, for the pleaſing ſtyle has many more admirers than the terrible.

You do well in trying to acquire a more careful

execution in your paintings. I am not apprehenſive of your ever getting into a laboured minuteneſs. In order to improve in this reſpect, I would adviſe you to exerciſe yourſelf occaſionally in copying from good pictures ſuch parts as are moſt diſtinguiſhed for a ſpirited touch, or harmony of colouring. I have heard M. Vernell, the director of the picture gallery at Duſſeldorf, ſay, that for a great length of time he found himſelf unable to finiſh any picture as he wiſhed, and that he was always obliged to lay aſide the bruſh, feeling that every thing was deficient in his work, yet that he could add nothing more to complete it, until at laſt, by means of copying aſſiduouſly, and with all poſſible care, ſome pictures of very delicate execution, he was enabled to give to his own that degree of finiſh, which they required. A copyiſt, who is endowed with feeling, will obſerve, in a well choſen original, an infinity of ſhades, of tones, of reflections, &c. which his eye, not yet ſufficiently exerciſed, could not ſo eaſily diſcover in nature. But, on this, as well as on every other ſubject, M. Graaf will give you the beſt inſtructions poſſible.

LETTER XVIII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

Dreſden, March 29, 1785.

THE exhibition was opened on the 5th of March, and will be cloſed this week. I have deferred writing to you till now, that I might be able to tell you ſomething deciſive on my fate.

I know not how to expreſs my joy at having obtained, in this firſt exhibition, the bare idea of which made me tremble, a degree of ſucceſs far above my warmeſt expectations. My works have been admired; being the only paintings in this ſtyle which are exhibited this year, and alſo being entirely my own, they have engaged univerſal attention, and even that, if I may be allowed to ſay it, of connoiſſeurs. Caſanova, who was the director of the exhibition, and had not yet ſeen any of my works, expreſſed himſelf much ſatisfied, and even appeared to diſcover more merit in them than he had expected. I have had the honour of being introduced to ſome of the nobility, and among them to the

duke of Courland, uncle to the Elector. Our converſation, to ſay the truth, was neither very long nor very intereſting, but it was, nevertheleſs, a very flattering diſtinction for me; for I am the only one, excepting Kerſch, a young hiſtorical painter of great talents, who is a pupil of Caſanova, to whom this favour has been allowed.

If I were to attempt to deſcribe to you only a tenth part of the pictures, which have been exhibited, my letter would become a large volume; but the account, which is always publiſhed of them after every exhibition, will give you all the details you can wiſh for. I ſhall content myſelf with mentioning thoſe only which are moſt remarkable.

1. Two portraits by Graaf; one of a Woman, and the other of an old General; they are both maſter-pieces in this ſtyle, and are equally excellent for the truth of the drawing, the ſimplicity of the deſign, the beauty of the colouring, and the grandeur of the effect.

2. The conſpiracy of Catiline, by Caſanova. The artiſt has choſen that point of time, when the conſpirators are drinking the blood of a man, whom they have juſt ſlaughtered. The figures are rather more than half the ſize of life; they are well choſen, correctly drawn, and full of expreſſion;

expreſſion; a taſte for the antique flows through the whole. The dead man is a maſter-piece of drawing in the moſt difficult foreſhortenings. Caſanova proves himſelf in this picture completely maſter of drawing, but he has rather neglected the colouring. In order to produce all the effect, which might be expected from this picture, it requires, in addition to the majeſty and boldneſs of the deſign, a more attractive tone of colouring, or the beautiful effects of light and ſhade of a Reynolds.

3. However raſh and inconſiſtent this opinion may appear to you, yet I muſt confeſs, that I cannot admire —— I cannot diſcern nature in any part of his works. His fleſh looks bloated, and he has no knowledge of anatomy, or at moſt it is very ſuperficial. His pictures are moſt commonly overloaded with ornaments, and ſo gaudy that the principal figure is diſtinguiſhed only by the aſſiſtance of the moſt powerful colours: his draperies have no truth: you ſee on each ſleeve a multitude of folds, which could not be diſcovered in the moſt pliant ſatin. If one may believe the reports of the public, this artiſt owes the greateſt ſhare of his reputation to certain allegorical deſigns of a flattering nature, which have gained him credit more eaſily, as here, I am told, matters of taſte are frequently decided by the ladies about the court. Another artiſt of my acquaintance has obtained equal ſuc-

ceſs from this important tribunal, of which, they ſay, a man of very high rank does not diſdain to be conſidered the preſident. Pardon me, if I grow too warm, but when I compare the beautiful works of M. Graaf with the caricatures of theſe gentlemen, and that . . . . . but I muſt be ſilent. Let us return to the exhibition.

4. M. Canale, an engraver, and profeſſor at the academy, has exhibited a head, which has coſt him a year's labour: it is called the Speculative Philoſopher. This philoſopher is ſcratching his head with great fury, as if all his wiſdom had taken up its abode in his hair. What conſtitutes the ſuperior merit of this engraving in the opinion of ſome perſons, is, that every hair has its light and its ſhadowy ſide, ſo that the hair and the beard reſemble a collection of worms. In other reſpects, the drapery is hard, without any folds, and the drawing very incorrect.

5. Two fine landſcapes, by Klengel; they contain large groups of trees, graceful figures, and water with beautiful reflections; but they are both in the uſual brown manner of this artiſt, and the diſtances are too purple.

6. A landſcape engraved by Zing, after Wagner. This is a maſter-piece in engraving; the preciſion, with

with which the artiſt has expreſſed the gradation and ſoftneſs of the tints in the diſtance, are particularly admired.

7. A portrait in Indian ink by Seidelman in his peculiar ſtyle, which is ſo well known and produces ſuch a beautiful effect.

Theſe are all that I can ſelect from the room allotted to the profeſſors. With regard to the ſtudents, I ſhall mention the moſt diſtinguiſhed among thoſe, who have obtained the praiſe of the beſt artiſts.

1. Kerſch, the pupil of Caſanova, a young man of one and twenty, has exhibited, for the firſt time, a picture in oil, the ſubject of which is, the twelve labours of Hercules. The figures are the ſize of life; the compoſition is full of fire, and the drawing, which is aſtoniſhingly correct, ſhews a perfect knowledge of anatomy. This work ſeems to promiſe to its author a ſpeedy elevation to the moſt diſtinguiſhed claſs of artiſts.

2. Two portraits, in crayons, by Vogel, of children of four and five years old. One repreſents a little girl; ſhe is leaning both her arms on a table, and is looking ſteadfaſtly before her; the expreſſion is charming; there is an undefinable mixture of

innocence and archneſs, a look of ingenuouſneſs which I never yet ſaw ſo well delineated. The other is a portrait of a boy; the attitude is the ſame as in the preceding one, and there is not leſs nature in the expreſſion. The colouring is warm and pleaſing; the artiſt has given ſpirit and taſte even to a ribband or the moſt trifling thing; yet nothing appears laboured.

3. Günther has diſtinguiſhed himſelf in landſcape. Thoſe, which he has exhibited do the greateſt credit to his abilities. They are large clumps of trees which loſe themſelves in ſhadow. The landſcape is terminated in the back-ground by a dark and gloomy wood, and a perfect calm ſeems to reign throughout the whole. This artiſt does not diſperſe his lights through his pictures, as if by chance, but diſpoſes them in ſuch a manner as to produce the moſt ſtriking effects. His ſtyle of compoſition has nothing little in it; it poſſeſſes a harmony and a picturesque feeling, which diſtribute life and intereſt to every object. Beſides which he may be ranked among thoſe, who have not adopted any peculiar manner, and who form their ſtyle entirely from nature. With him I ſhall conclude my liſt of thoſe ſtudents who have more particularly attracted the attention of the public.

We

We have loſt the old and truly reſpectable Lippert. He died on the 20th of March at ten o'clock in the morning. Some weeks before his death I went to him with M. Zing, and ſaw him, but I could not ſpeak to him, for he had juſt fallen aſleep. His daughter wanted to wake him, but we entreated her not to diſturb him. It will always be a pleaſant reflection to me, that I have ſeen this worthy old man, even although he was aſleep.

LETTER XIX.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, April 12, 1785.

Do you not think, that we have been very negligent in anſwering your letter, in which every ſubject was ſuch as occaſion us the moſt lively ſatisfaction? The reaſon of our ſilence, my dear ſon, is, that you had promiſed to ſend us ſhortly ſome of your laſt pictures, and I waited to announce to you their arrival; but I now perceive, that we ſhall have to wiſh for them ſome time yet; I will not, therefore, defer any longer writing you ſome account of our family.

Your letter, as well as thoſe we received from Meſſrs. Zing and Graaf, gave us inexpreſſible pleaſure. Theſe two eſtimable artiſts entertain almoſt a paternal affection for you; and they exert themſelves for you as much as poſſible. How grateful ought you to feel towards them; and indeed how much are we all indebted to them!—Your ſucceſs in the exhibition has fulfilled the hopes I entertained:

tained: I expected from you ſuch works as would do you credit; but be careful, my dear ſon, that the flattering encouragement you have received does not turn your brain: do not give way too much to the gratification of being praiſed by the public. Attend only to the praiſes or cenſures of thoſe, who are good judges of the art. The former will inſpire you with freſh ardour, and encourage you to purſue your path without being diſheartened by the frequent obſtacles that will preſent themſelves; but you muſt conſider the latter of moſt importance, although they will make you ſenſible of your faults, and of the difficulties you have to overcome in an unpleaſant manner. Attend implicitly to the rule you have impoſed on yourſelf of comparing your works with thoſe only of the great maſters. Let the principal object, which ſhould be ever preſent to your mind, be the attainment of that high degree of finiſhing, which was acquired by the moſt fertile genius, joined to the moſt ſingular talents, by the efforts of intenſe application; you will then never be in danger of falling into that pernicious ſelf-ſatisfaction, which has ſtopped ſo many artiſts in the middle of their career, who ſuffered themſelves to be ſeduced by the prepoſterous praiſes of half-critics, or by the compariſon, which they drew between their own and productions of an inferior kind.

Laſt

Laſt ſummer, in your viſits to the gallery, you made more uſe of your eyes than of your pencil; I recommend you now to do exactly the contrary. Study in Ruyſdael and in others of the Flemiſh ſchool, the charms of their pencilling and their ſeductive adherence to nature. In Berghem, ſtudy the grandeur of his rocky maſſes, for you will have but few opportunities of ſtudying good natural ones in Saxony. The labour of copying may perhaps be tedious at firſt, but if you confine yourſelf to looking only at good pictures, you will never acquire facility of execution. Employ all this ſummer in working from nature and from the beſt maſters. You will no doubt recommence your excurſions with M. Zing; I adviſe you on thoſe occaſions to attend particularly to the finiſhing of your drawings. Hitherto your trees have been drawn with boldneſs and with feeling; but their forms were not ſufficiently determinate and characteriſtic; you muſt now endeavour to give, as much as poſſible, the eſſential and peculiar character to every object. Do not confine yourſelf to drawing only; you muſt paint alſo from nature; by this means you will combine the ſtudy of colours with that of forms. Exerciſe yourſelf frequently in drawing detached parts; the trunks or branches of trees; combinations of rocks, &c. If theſe are not complete ſubjects for a picture, they will at leaſt be ſtudies, which may prove uſeful.

I have nothing new to tell you of ourſelves or our neighbours. Freidweiler is always very buſy; he has a great many ſmall family pictures to do, with two figures and ſometimes more. He ſucceeds in them very well; yet in my opinion he might have learnt a better management of his colours from his ſtudies at the gallery, and the leſſons he received from Graaf, particularly in his heads, which are often too flat, and the ſhades of which want vigour. He is frequently deficient alſo in the hands and legs: he is aware of it, and ſeriouſly grieved at it; but he has not the courage to follow the advice I continually give him, of dedicating a month or two entirely to the ſtudy of hands, beginning firſt with the ſkeleton of that part, and then painting them from nature, until he feels no difficulty in doing them well. He thinks the advice excellent; but he has not yet followed it.

The Saxon blue, which you ſent, is of great ſervice to me, and you may ſend ſome more of it. I ſhould be glad to know alſo, if the varniſh which is uſed for the pictures in the gallery is not copal varniſh? Do not forget to anſwer this queſtion.

You have now loſt your friend Feer; have you no one to conſole you for his loſs? Is not Kerſch a good ſubſtitute? If you ſee him, aſſure him of my ſincere eſteem. I adviſe you, whenever you make

make a new acquaintance, to conſider well the character and conduct of him, with whom it is to be formed. I ſhall write immediately to Meſſrs. Graaf and Zing. They ſay things of you, relating to your art as well as to your conduct and ſentiments, for which, in the delight of our hearts, we bleſs you ten thouſand times. Farewell, my dear ſon, you muſt compenſate for your late neglects, by writing to us as ſoon as poſſible.

Your affectionate father,

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XX.

J. GESSNER TO HER SON.

You will, no doubt, read more than once, my dear ſon, the letter, which your father has juſt written to you. The inſtructive obſervations of an able artiſt are united with the affectionate advice of a tender father, who wiſhes to encourage the ardour of his ſon, and give him thoſe directions, which will be moſt uſeful to him. Your letters prove, that you know how to profit from both. There are paſſages in them, which ſhew me your whole heart undiſguiſed, and which are of inestimable value to mine. I am not capable of judging of your talents, as an artiſt; but I obſerve in your conduct the principles of a good and honeſt man, which is the moſt ſolid foundation of my peace and comfort. This, believe me, is the ſweeteſt recompenſe, which a mother can experience from her children, who, not ſatisfied with merely bringing them into the world, feels it the duty and pleaſure of her whole life to be uſeful to them on every poſſible occaſion. Continue as you have begun,

begun, my dear ſon, and we ſhall one day owe to each other our mutual happineſs.

Feer has given you leſſons in architecture; do not omit, therefore, to recompenſe him for his trouble in a ſuitable manner. I think with ſorrow of his departure; becauſe this ſeparation from the friend of your youth muſt be very painful to you. Arm yourſelf with courage, and endeavour to moderate the too lively affections of your heart. I have frequently remarked, with ſome regret, the exceſſive attachment you indulge towards thoſe, who ſee and feel as you do yourſelf, and the total neglect with which you ſeem to treat every one elſe. I ſhould reproach a man with ſuch a fault, who was deſtined to paſs his life in a ſmall and unvarying circle; but in an artiſt, who has a great object in view, and whoſe country is the whole world, this diſpoſition ſeems to me likely to produce a great number of inconveniencies.

Alas, my ſon! the life, you have hitherto led in your father's houſe, has been in fact a paſtoral life, and not ſuch a one as was neceſſary for the education of a man, whoſe deſtiny ſummons him into the world. I feel it but too ſtrongly; your daily commerce with your father, the angelic goodneſs of his heart, the friendlineſs and ſoft ſimplicity of his character, which preſerved

an

an habitual ſerenity and innocent gaiety round his fireſide; the ſelect circle of friends which a conformity of taſte and ſentiment, and a real love for all that is good and noble, ſo ſtrongly attached to him; all theſe were ſources of the pureſt degree of pleaſure for your youth: and may the remembrance of theſe happy days long remain impreſſed on your mind! it will ſtill procure you many enjoyments, and, above all, an advantage of great importance to you, that of rendering you more difficult in the formation of new friendſhips; the openneſs and ſincerity of your character will, no doubt, often make you feel embaraſſed in the great world, until experience has taught you the art of living in it; but never forget, my dear child, that in this world you muſt be guided by your head, and not truſt to your heart alone; the union of them is what conſtitutes a truly eſtimable man, and renders him uſeful to ſociety, but in that, as well as in every thing elſe, your father will be your beſt model.

Adieu, my dear ſon; I am your affectionate mother,

J. GESSNER.

LETTER XXI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, May 10th, 1785

At length I am enabled to ſend you ſome of my works. They conſiſt of a copy from Wouverman; two ſketches of horſes (ſome which I made, when I firſt went to Dreſden), a ſtable, and the two large pictures, which I exhibited. Fate ſeemed to be hoſtile to the completion of the two laſt; I had intended finiſhing them with all poſſible care, but I had not rightly calculated the period, when the exhibition was to open; and, ſurpriſed to find it ſo near, I was obliged to finiſh my pictures in a haſty manner. Fortunately for me, the place which was aſſigned them at the exhibition was very high, ſo that they could only be criticiſed from the general effect of them. I painted the trees from nature, and alſo the dragoons and the horſes, which I have always been careful ſhould be completely equipped before I drew them.

M. Graaf has told me the compoſition of a varniſh for retouching, which is very uſeful for ſmall objects.

objects. It gives a certain fluidity and transparence to the colours, which hitherto all my efforts had not been able to produce. It is compoſed of turpentine, oil of poppies, and maſtic. It is almoſt the colour of the white of Chemnitz; and the conſiſtence is that of colours in general; but, when it is to be uſed, a good deal of poppy oil muſt be added to clear it. Many painters diſapprove the uſe of it, yet Dietrich uſed it continually, and his pictures ſtill retain all their freſhneſs. At firſt I uſed it too abundantly, which made my pictures ſo long in drying, that even to-day I had ſome difficulty in waſhing them over with white of egg.

My laſt letter informed you of my ſucceſs at the exhibition; but do not be afraid, my dear parents, I ſhall not have much difficulty in reſtraining my vanity and pride. I feel too ſenſibly how ſmall a ſhare of the praiſes I have received are to be placed to my account, and how large a portion I owe, perhaps only, to the advantage of having been preſented as your ſon. As your ſon! alas! I feel how much I have ſtill to accompliſh to render myſelf worthy of you; and it is your approbation, which above all, I am moſt emulous to deſerve. If you receive my feeble productions with your uſual kindneſs, and if you perceive any improvement in them, all my efforts will be amply rewarded, and I ſhall be inſpired with freſh ardour to combat the

immenſe difficulties which almoſt overcome me, when I conſider in its fartheſt extent the taſk which, as an artiſt, I have to perform.

The gallery is now open. I ſhall not fail to viſit it every day; and according to the excellent advice which you gave me in your laſt letter, I ſhall employ myſelf in copying ſome of the pictures.

Feer left me to-day. We ſeparated with mutual ſorrow, and ſhall long feel his loſs. Since Eaſter I have removed to a new lodging, in which I enjoy a very agreeable view of the country, with an extenſive horizon, and a good light for painting. I have had with me, ſince the winter, a young man, a pupil of Graaf's, full of talent, who had not a corner in his own lodging where it was poſſible for him to paint. He ſhares my room, and we paſs the whole day painting, ſinging and whiſtling together.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, July 7th.

I AM again employed in my viſits to the gallery, and, as you adviſed, I paſs the greateſt part of my time in painting there. I already feel, by experience, the abſolute neceſſity of this labour, which is in fact the only method of penetrating into all the ſecrets of the execution of a picture. I ſhall endeavour to ſtudy Wouverman, principally for his horſes, his ground, his hills, his elegant touch, and his beautiful colouring; Berghem, for his rocks; and Ruyſdael, for his trees. M. Graaf adviſes me to confine myſelf to the ſtudy of particular parts in each picture; I propoſe, however, copying the whole of ſome of Wouverman's pictures as well as I poſſibly can, in order to accuſtom myſelf to an eaſy and careful ſtyle of pencilling; but I never will ſacrifice every thing to the modern taſte, which is only pleaſed with high finiſhing and minuteneſs. Not that I do not feel a ſuitable degree of admiration for the heads of Denner, which will even

bear to be examined with a microſcope: ſuch works have their peculiar merit; but how ſenſibly is this merit diminiſhed, when compared with a fine head by Vandycke, in which the drawing is perfect, the colouring enchanting, and in which every feature ſeems animated by nature and truth.

In landſcape-painting the objects of my admiration are ſtill the ſame. The animated touch of Ruyſdael, and the beautiful verdure of his trees, the dew-beſprinkled leaves of which, reflect the rays of the ſun; and the fine colouring of Claude Lorraine; the elevated ideas of Pouſſin; and the wild and melancholy views of Van Everdingen.

M. Graaf is at preſent copying the two angels heads in the picture of the Madona, by Raphael, which has afforded me an opportunity of ſeeing it cloſe, and at my leiſure. I can eaſily conceive, that his real beauties often eſcape the obſervation even of artiſts; time has much damaged this invaluable painting; the colouring, which is now too red in ſome parts, and in others too grey, had, no doubt, originally more brilliancy and freſhneſs; yet it is ſtill perfect nature. The virgin with the child in her arms is entirely detached from the ground of the picture, and appears quite inſolated. The figure is light, noble, and elegant, and ſeems to float in the air; the drapery is thrown into large and ſimple maſſes;

maſſes; without appearing to ſtick to the limbs, it ſhews the movement, and leads the imagination to the form. The execution of this picture is perfect; the moſt trifling details are expreſſed with care; the ſhadows are not dark, yet every thing is relieved with effect. The figures are truly of divine mould, and the expreſſion of the heads is that of truth itſelf. Nothing can be more enchanting than the heads of the two angels, whoſe eyes, raiſed towards heaven, ſeem to reflect the calmneſs and ſerenity of that happy abode of felicity. The celebrated Cupid, painted in crayons by Mengs, trying the point of his darts on his fingers, and his countenance animated by a moſt bewitching ſmile, ſo ſtrongly reſembles the heads of the two angels, by Raphael, that one is induced to ſuppoſe, that Mengs muſt have ſtudied them with great attention.

I have made enquiries, as you deſired, of Riedel, the inſpector of the gallery, about the varniſh, which is uſed there; he told me that they did not uſe any, and he ſhewed me ſome pictures which the moſt innocent varniſh has totally deſtroyed in the courſe of a very few years.

M. Graaf ſet out to-day for Carlſbad, and he has promiſed me very faithfully, that next year we ſhall viſit you together at Sihlwald.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXIII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Sihlwald, Aug. 15th, 1785.

We have, at length, received all your letters and your parcels, my dear ſon, and the firſt ſubject I ſhall mention to you, will be that which gave me moſt pleaſure, and that is, your works. I obſerve in the compoſition, as well as execution, of them all, much boldneſs and fire; the two largeſt pictures require indeed to be viewed with ſome precaution; thoſe, who ſee them, muſt be appriſed, that they are to be judged as ſketches, and ſeen only at the diſtance of ſome paces; however, the idea and effect of both gave me very great pleaſure, and they have been admired by all, whoſe opinion can be of any importance to you. I was ſtruck with the boldneſs of the compoſition, and the grand effect of the whole; the tone of the ſky is in perfect harmony with the reſt of the ſcene, and unites in giving force to the principal groupe; each object, although merely indicated, is expreſſed with truth and character. In general, I obſerve a good deal of mind

mind and taſte in the diſpoſition of the groupes, and I remark, with pleaſure, in both the pictures the great ſhare which the harmony of the ſkies adds to the general effect of the work. All this, my dear ſon, is indicative of talent and abilities, and proves that the great works of art have made a deep impreſſion on your mind, and that you obſerve nature with feeling and attention. Your groupes are eaſy, and are well contraſted; the attitudes and actions of your figures are ſimple and unaffected; and your horſes, if I may dare to ſpeak freely, are above criticiſm; do not, however, be tempted to purſue only that ſtyle, in which you ſucceed the beſt. In that picture, for example, in which the horſes are coming out of the ſtable to be led to the fountain, the ray, which lengthens into a ſtreak of light, has a very good effect, as have alſo the various contraſts of light and ſhade; but Wouverman would probably have converted the young lad, who is going to mount one of the horſes, into a huntſman, and from that circumſtance would have availed himſelf of the opportunity of introducing a group of dogs, as Berghem would, a few goats. Thoſe are the things, which produce a variety and contraſt in the forms of objects. There is much truth in your oak-tree, but you have only ſketched the principal forms; you muſt ſtudy with care, and imitate with exactneſs, the beſt examples of individual objects, and not confine yourſelf ſolely to oaks; for the linden-tree, the beech, the

aſh, the willow, and the poplar, are alſo very picturesque. Methinks I hear you exclaim, but how am I to do all this in a year? No, my child, I do not expect ſo much from you, and if you were at this moment by my ſide, I ſhould preſs you to my heart and ſay with tears of joy, that you have ſurpaſſed my moſt ſanguine hopes.

I adviſe you to perſiſt firmly in your determination of copying with attention the beſt pictures in the gallery; ſtudy with particular care, neatneſs of execution and preciſion in the form of objects. In drawing the human figure always make choice of the beſt models you can procure; beſtow the greateſt attention on the hands and heads; and be careful, in the colouring, not to get the ſhadows of a dirty red hue. Some very exact copies from Wouverman would, no doubt, be a very uſeful employment for you, and in thoſe which you have ſent me I think you have ſucceeded tolerably well. A laboured minuteneſs in the details is certainly only eſteemed by the ignorant; but elegance in the execution is nevertheleſs an excellence with which the critic cannot diſpenſe. You have now the antique ſtatues to ſtudy; tell me what you are doing from them. The tranſports which Raphael creates in you, convinces me, that you will alſo feel the great beauty of the ancients. Happy is that artiſt, who

has

has had the opportunity of forming his ideas of beauty from ſuch ſublime models.

We are happy to find, that you are in a better lodging; and what you ſay of your new companion is a proof of your good diſpoſition, which gives us great pleaſure.

In order to convince you of the entire ſatisfaction which we feel at your conduct, we are going to make a propoſition to you, which, I am ſure, will be productive of a few capers. Mr. Orell, the chief of a ſquadron which is at preſent at Zurich, tells us, that all the Sileſian army is to encamp near Potſdam this autumn, and perform there ſome of the moſt important manœuvres. This is a ſight which would give you a great number of ideas, and would be of the moſt eſſential ſervice to you in your line; and we will willingly advance you whatever ſum may be neceſſary to procure you ſuch an advantage. Therefore, my dear child, you are quite at liberty to go to the camp. Mr. Orell will give you letters of introduction to the officers, who will receive you with politeneſs. I know you too well to ſuppoſe it neceſſary to guard you againſt the dangers, to which your reſidence in a camp will expoſe you, particularly that of gaming. You already know, that there are often amongſt the officers, ſome induſtrious gentlemen who make it their buſineſs to lay traps

for

for young inexperienced people; there are beſides various other exceſſes, by indulging in which you might endanger your health for the reſt of your life. Perſevere, therefore, with firmneſs, in the principles which you have adopted, and which you have hitherto practiſed. Farewell, my dear ſon.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXIV.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, Oct. 4th, 1785.

I RECEIVED your very kind letters about a month ſince; I cannot expreſs the joy they occaſioned me. The flattering approbation, which you beſtow on my works, was already a ſufficient recompence for my efforts; but I little expected that you would add to it your permiſſion for me to go to Potſdam to ſee the great Frederick; that was indeed a ſpring to make me jump ſix feet high. Unfortunately, it is now too late for me to be preſent at the review this autumn; but next ſpring Mr. Graaf gives me ſome hops, he will join me, and that will be a ſufficient reaſon for the delay, to which I agree more readily as the king is at preſent unwell, and could not have been preſent at this laſt review. Heaven grant, that my wiſhes may be fulfilled, and that I may ſee once, at leaſt, in my life, this incomparable monarch.

I am juſt returned from a month's excurſion into the

the country with M. Zingg. During this time, I confeſs, my occupation at the gallery has been neglected; but I think myſelf rewarded for this loſs by thoſe beauties, ſo ſuperior to art, which I obſerved in nature, and by the advantages I deduced from comparing the objects, which preſented themſelves, with thoſe maſter-pieces of art, which my imagination continually retraced. I have endeavoured to give more correctneſs and neatneſs to my drawings from nature; I alſo obſerved the colouring of objects, and, during rainy weather, tinted ſeveral drawings from memory, beſides thoſe which I coloured on the ſpot with the juice of plants.

I have formed a very intimate acquaintance with a young landſcape painter from Leipſick, named Reinhard. He has a great deal of genius and character; his landſcapes are quite nature. His compoſitions poſſeſs much ſpirit and taſte, and he draws with firmneſs and accuracy. We often wander about the country together, admiring nature, and committing to paper thoſe ſcenes which are moſt ſtriking. Yeſterday we took a little ride to a beautiful valley about five leagues from Dreſden, which is one of the moſt delightful ſituations I have yet ſeen in this country. Imagine to yourſelf a narrow paſs through ſome ſteep rocks, like thoſe which Berghem was ſo fond of painting, caſcades, trees of a majeſtic ſize, in ſhort, ſcenes exactly like thoſe of Everdingen.

Everdingen. This charming ſpot threw us into ſuch raptures, that we blew our French horn, and made the valley and the rocks ring with our harmonious ſounds.

In our laſt journey we heard the poſtillion execute ſome fine airs on the horn; we immediately determined to get ſome inſtruments like his, and ſince that time, whenever a lovely retired ſcene invites us to take refuge in its peaceful boſom, we never fail to greet the ſurrounding mountains and foreſts with an air on the French horn. We intend returning in a few day to our favourite valley, with all our painting apparatus.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXV.

GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, Oct. 12th.

JUST at the moment, when Reinhard and myſelf were ſetting out on an expedition towards Leibthal, which is the very appropriate name of the valley I deſcribed to you in my laſt letter, I received the painters-mirror, which you have had the goodneſs to ſend me; it will henceforth be the conſtant companion of my pictureſque excurſions, and I improve daily in the uſe of it. I prefer it infinitely to all kinds of Camera-obſcura, becauſe it may be ſo eaſily carried in the pocket, and alſo becauſe it reflects objects with perfect diſtinctneſs even in ſhade. I muſt now give you an account of our journey. Our perſons being well packed up in a poſt-chaiſe, together with our colour boxes, and all the implements of our trade, we ſet out for our favorite retreat, which we explored in every direction, ſometimes meeting with fine ſcenes in Ruyſdael's ſtyle, but more frequently with views and perſpectives, ſuch as Everdingen delighted in. One would ſuppoſe,

poſe, that the latter had made frequent viſits to this ſpot, and had taken from it the ſubject of his beſt pictures. We eſtabliſhed ourſelves in a hut with ſome good honeſt peaſants, whoſe habitation is ſituated amidſt the trees of a fine orchard, which ſurround it with a pleaſing ſhade. At break of day we left our bed of clean ſtraw, where we had enjoyed a refreſhing ſleep, to deſcend into a valley where a little ſtream winds its courſe, and which, impeded in its progreſs by ſome fragments of rocks, falls here and there in a ſmall caſcade. At the bottom of the valley, in a receſs formed by high rocks, large firs, and thick beech trees, the ſame ſtream precipitates itſelf from the top of a maſs of rocks with the moſt picturesque effect. It was in this ſpot, truly worthy of a poet's eye, that we eſtabliſhed our apparatus; the ſun's rays in various parts pierced through the tufted foliage, and added freſh brilliancy to the objects which already wore all the different tints of autumn, and formed a mixed ſcene, which, in its confuſed variety, preſented to the eye a ſofter harmony of colours. The tone of colouring, and the water, were preciſely the ſame as in Ruyſdael's pictures, and therefore, I ſtudied them with particular attention.

We were agreeably ſurpriſed in the midſt of our ſtudies by a viſit from Meſſrs. Graaf and Zingg. They applauded our courageous perſeverance in

working from nature, and admired our contrivance as a ſubſtitute for an eaſel, which we could not have made uſe of in the ſituation we were in, ſeated on pieces of rock in the middle of the river. I will tell you how we managed; we tied a ſtring to two corners of the picture, and putting it over our necks, reſting the picture on our knees, we painted with tolerable facility, although the attitude was not the moſt elegant. It was in this way that we paſſed our time from the dawn of day till night. As we had eaten a very ſmall portion for dinner, we transferred all our appetite to the ſupper, which, added to our uſual gaiety, furniſhed an excellent ſauce to the frugal repaſt provided for us by our hoſt.

It muſt be confeſſed, that it is very humiliating to an artiſt to work with nature immediately before his eyes; he then feels his inſufficiency to repreſent it; and the difficulty of the taſk diminiſhes the pleaſure. Thus, in a fit of too well-founded deſpair, I was going to efface what I had done, when M. Graaf arrived juſt in time to ſave it from deſtruction; and the ſatisfaction which he expreſſed, having reanimated my courage, I continued and finiſhed my picture. Now that I ſee it in my room, I am better pleaſed with it than I was in the open air; I obſerve in it ſome touches of nature, and a tone of colouring which I could never have acquired, even with the greateſt efforts, if I had painted

painted it in my room. I am now more than ever convinced, that although this may be the moſt difficult mode, yet it is the moſt certain; and ſince I have employed myſelf in ſtudying attentively the pictures in the gallery, inſtead of merely looking at them, I feel alſo how much that circumſtance has improved me, by enabling me to ſtudy nature with more eaſe, and teaching me to diſtinguiſh and make choice of its principal beauties.

How rare are thoſe artiſts, who excel in this reſpect! the greateſt part of them do not begin to obſerve nature, until they are accuſtomed to a ſtyle of their own, which they blindly follow even in the imitation of nature; thus it is, that they always fail in the object of their wiſhes, that of expreſſing it with truth and accuracy. They indeed paint the ſtones and the trees, which preſent themſelves to their eyes one after the other, and with ſuch ſcrupulous exactneſs that you would ſuppoſe they had counted them; but they have not the leaſt idea of giving the real character to each object; and notwithſtanding their exactneſs in all the parts, their pictures do not poſſeſs any truth or effect. I confeſs I cannot endure any thing like manneriſm. Claude Lorraine, Berghem, and Ruyſdael, are the only painters, to whom I can turn with pleaſure, even after examining nature, for they are the only ones, who admire it in all its purity, and who preſent it to my eyes

chaſte and undefiled. Each tree, each ſtone, each plant, in ſhort every thing in their works, has its true and appropriate character; in my opinion, this is the excellence of the art, and it ſhall be, throughout my life, that which I ſhall be moſt ambitious to acquire. I praiſe your works, my dear father, as much as I do thoſe of theſe great artiſts, and I aſſure you, my judgment is not biaſſed by partiality. I admire in your paintings thoſe trees ſo full of life, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, yet characteriſed by ſuch a light and eaſy touch; thoſe ſcenes ſo rich and varied, yet without a glaring profuſion; in ſhort, that attention to ſimple, unadorned nature, which muſt ever pleaſe, becauſe it is true.

An artiſt, who is not endowed with a very diſtinguiſhed talent, may yet, by means of conſtant application and a continued ſtudy of nature, become a good painter; but with what a ſuperiority and originality of expreſſion, which can never be accuſed of manneriſm, does an artiſt of real genius pourtray nature in its true character! In the heads of Vandyck for example, the labour of the painter is not diſcernible in any part. They breathe, they ſeem to ſpeak; but it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe, that they were painted with only a few ſtrokes of the pencil with that facility which is acquired by practice. A cloſe examination will prove how attentively they have been ſtudied. Vandyck is ſo perfect

perfect a draughtſman, that he retains almoſt every where the firſt ſtroke of the pencil; but one may obſerve in his heads ſome parts, which have been painted over ſeveral times, and in which the colouring is opaque, while in others it is ſo tranſparent that the pannel on which it is applied is ſeen through the colour. This circumſtance, in my opinion, characteriſes a man of genius, who knows where to ſtop, without expoſing himſelf to the danger of ever paſſing the point of perfection, when he has once been able to attain it. But I think it highly ridiculous in certain people, who try to imitate in their blundering manner this ſcarcely perceptible neglect, and to affect it on all occaſions without being aware of the art of the great maſter, which taught him to profit from an unforeſeen accident, or from the inſpiration of his genius.

The academy for drawing from the life is again open; and as I perceive, that this is an employment from which I have profited conſiderably, I purſue it every every evening with real pleaſure. I exert myſelf as much as poſſible to acquire a degree of proficiency above mediocrity, although the human figure is, of all objects of imitation, the moſt difficult to expreſs. Beſides the hours, which I paſs at the academy, I alſo draw in the evening from anatomical models; I draw each limb one after the other in white chalk on a black board till I know it by heart,

then I copy it on paper with pen and ink, and when I go to the academy I take with me the drawing of that part, which I am to execute from nature. By this method I know the exact deſtination of each muſcle that I ſee. This preliminary ſtudy appears to me to be of abſolute importance; for in nature the muſcles extend or relax even in the leaſt painful attitudes according as the model is obliged to exert himſelf more or leſs to continue in it.

That I may advance as much as poſſible in the knowledge of Oſteology, I have borrowed of Kerſch a complete ſkeleton which I ſtudy at home, each part ſeparately; an employment which I ſhall continue till I have acquired a complete knowledge of the whole. I feel but too powerfully the great utility of ſuch a ſtudy not to follow it with perſeverance.

I labour night and day, that I may be in a ſtate to appear with credit in the next exhibition. I have made the ſketches for two large pictures. They are groupes of cavalry placed in attitudes of danger; the figures will be at leaſt a foot high.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXVI.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Dec. 4, 1785.

I THOUGHT, my dear ſon, that the Engliſh mirror would be an agreeable preſent to you, and you have ſo well gueſſed the advantages of it that I do not doubt you will be able to derive great uſe from it. I have nothing more to ſay about it, excepting that the little ring which is affixed to it, is for the purpoſe of hanging it to the ſtems or branches of trees, or elſe to a pole ſtuck into the ground, while you are drawing the landſcape which it repreſents. But it is not neceſſary to ſay every thing to a fertile and induſtrious invention like yours, which can diſcover reſources under every circumſtance; as for example, your clever contrivance to ſupply the deficiency of an eaſel.

I am much pleaſed, that you have ſo ſucceſsfully availed yourſelf of the fine weather to draw and even to paint from nature. This is a very uſeful exerciſe, and it is of infinite advantage to you that you were

able to do it in the company of such a man as Reinhard; I should like to be more accurately informed of the objects of your studies at the gallery. You had promised to give me an account of them in one of your former letters, yet your last does not afford me any information on this subject. Have you put your project in execution of copying detached parts from Ruysdael, Wouverman, and Claude, that you may afterwards acquire more facility in copying nature? I am very desirous that you should have accomplished this intention. All that you say about studying from nature is very just and well conceived; you must not content yourself with rapidly tracing the general masses of objects, but must also endeavour to express with precision and accuracy the form and character of each particular object; not forgetting, at the same time, that this accuracy must be united with the boldness of real talent, and by no means degenerate into a studied and individual minuteness.

The zeal, with which you pursue the study of the human figure, gives me infinite pleasure, and your method of comparing every part with the anatomy appears to me evidently the best; but I sincerely regret, that circumstances have not yet allowed you to prepare yourself for the study of nature by previously drawing from the antique. If those grand and noble forms were thoroughly imprinted on your mind,

nature

nature would appear to your eyes more beautiful and more perfect, and it would be more eaſy for you to elevate your ideas to the higheſt degree of beauty.

You are going to work again for the exhibition you ſay; begin early, that you may have ſufficient time to finiſh your works carefully. By projecting pictures, in which the figures are to be a foot high you have prevented the counſel, which I intended giving you; by theſe means your figures will be large enough to require preciſion in the forms, and elegance in the execution. But before you begin, make all the ſtudies that may be neceſſary to you; and I recommend you particularly to make yourſelf maſter of the heads and hands. How ſhould you proceed, if by chance you ſhould not be ſufficiently familiar with thoſe parts in regard to the colouring and execution? Do not, however, be too much alarmed, but accompliſh as much as you poſſibly can. Begin by arranging the whole of the picture, and when it is once thoroughly determined, ſketch thoſe parts ſeparately, which occaſion you the moſt difficulty, and ſtudy them with the utmoſt attention. Do not neglect alſo to ſtudy from nature the acceſſary parts, and particularly the drapery and the folds of the dreſſes, and the beſt manner of diſpoſing them, for you muſt now endeavour to appear before the public with credit to yourſelf. Be careful in the finiſhing;

finiſhing; attend to the execution, but without being too laboured. There is a wide difference between that artiſt, who affects a haſty and negligent manner in thoſe parts, where, notwithſtanding all his efforts, he cannot attain an exact and accurate repreſentation of nature, and he, whoſe apparent negligence is united to the moſt perfect veracity and moſt ſcrupulous correctneſs. The firſt ſhews a boldneſs, and perhaps even a degree of invention in concealing his want of power; but the negligence of the other diſplays throughout, a ſure, able, and ſteady hand.

You are again in want of money; you ſhall have ſome, my ſon. But I appeal to your conſcience, whether you do not think you have contrived to get rid of your laſt five and twenty louis in a very ſhort ſpace of time? I intreat you, my child, not to be too careleſs in your expences. It is certainly right, that you ſhould have whatever may be uſeful to you in purſuing your ſtudies; all that is neceſſary for your appearing with credit in the world, and even for enjoying the innocent paſtimes which are ſuited to your age; but always conſult prudence, and remember, that the artiſt, who creates to himſelf ſuperfluous wants, loſes in his art all that he gives to falſe enjoyments. By giving way to puerile occupations; he blunts his imagination, enervates his zeal, and becoming eager to acquire money for the gratification

of

of his paſſions, he will ſoon ceaſe to be ambitious of fame.

I entreat you moſt earneſtly, my dear ſon, to ſtudy heads and hands from the beſt maſters before you finiſh your pictures; and I alſo recommend to you, with regard to form, and the effects of light, to ſtudy heads from the antique, and from the beſt ſelected plaſters.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXVII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, Jan. 10, 1786.

I RECEIVED your letters very punctually, together with the bills of exchange, for which I return you a thouſand thanks, and promiſe in future to economiſe as much as poſſible, and to keep an exact account of even the moſt trifling of my expences. In fact, I had purchaſed ſome time ſince a large folio account book, in which the expences and receipts had each their page, though to my great regret, the latter remained always blank. However, I continued notwithſtanding for ſome months, to fill my pages with great exactneſs, and indeed I believe I made ſeveral ſmall purchaſes merely for the pleaſure of inſerting them in my book; my friends often found me ſeated at my deſk with a thoughtful air, like a clerk with my pen behind my ear, and comparing with aſtoniſhment the plenitude of the paying ſide with the vacancy of the oppoſite page. By degrees I relaxed from my exactneſs, and every day I grew more negligent. But on the firſt day of the year I determined to change my ſyſtem, and

and I made a ſolemn engagement henceforth to obſerve the moſt ſcrupulous punctuality in my accounts.

I have been obliged to change my lodging again; in that, which I have quitted, the ſun ſhone continually in my room, and occaſioned a falſe light. Theſe falſe lights are a conſtant torment to painters: the colours appear totally different in the ſun, and the reflections are ſtill more deceitful. At preſent I live oppoſite to the gallery, and not very diſtant from the academy: beſides which, I am very well ſerved; but you would laugh were you to ſee my retinue of ſervants; it is compoſed of ſome little chimney ſweepers who live at the bottom of the houſe in which I lodge, and whoſe ſervices are ſecured for the day by a ſmall ſum of money; this ſooty troop often accompanies me through the ſtreets, carrying my port-folios under their arms, and when I am thus eſcorted I might paſs for Fauſtus ſurrounded by infernal ſpirits.

The pictures, which I intend for the exhibition, are now in hand; the ſubject of one is a great battle with a large number of horſes and figures; the ſecond repreſents ſome light cavalry purſued by dragoons. They are flying out of a wood in the utmoſt confuſion, and jumping over the trunk of a tree which is lying on the ground in the front of the picture;

picture; ſome of them fall and are trampled under the horſes feet; the light proceeds from the middle of the foreſt; the principal figure is a dragoon mounted on a white horſe, who is leaping over the fallen tree, his countenance animated by an expreſſion of rage. The foreground is entirely ſhaded by a very large oak. If fortune favours me at the time of the exhibition, I think I may venture to hope for ſome ſucceſs, for I have never yet painted a picture with ſo much effect in it as this. The figures in both theſe pictures are twelve inches high. My third compoſition repreſents a detachment of light horſe, which is taking poſſeſſion of ſome cannon and ſome carriages laden with proviſions; one of the carriages is overturned, and the horſes, terrified, are rearing up, and breaking their traces. I have alſo painted ſome other pictures of a ſmaller ſize. At preſent, when I wiſh to finiſh any ſubject, I make different ſketches of each figure, all of which I draw from nature, in the proper attitude.

I acquire daily a greater degree of facility in drawing the human figure, in proportion as I increaſe my knowledge of anatomy by the conſtant ſtudy of the ſkeleton. Every evening, when I return from the academy, I copy on the canvas the figure which I have been drawing; I firſt place the ſkeleton in the attitude, in which the model was placed; and then I ſtudy, with particular attention, thoſe

thoſe parts which I found moſt difficult to expreſs, and do not quit it till I have acquired a thorough knowledge of the diſpoſition and form of the bones, and till I am certain of giving to my drawing all poſſible correctneſs and exactneſs.

Among the ſtudies I have made this ſummer in the gallery, ſome of which are more finiſhed than others, there is a very exact copy from Wouverman, and ſome detached parts from Ruyſdael.

My moſt intimate friend, Kerſch, is preparing to ſet off for Italy; he wiſhed very much to perſuade me to accompany him, and indeed he praiſed the beauties of the country and of Rome, and enumerated the advantages which that great city preſents to a young artiſt for the formation of his taſte and genius, with an eloquence ſo enthuſiaſtic and perſuaſive, that I had ſome difficulty in reſiſting his temptations. But, thanks to my good genius, which allowed me to compare with tranquillity and candour, the great diſtance which elevates Kerſch above me in our art, I have eſcaped the folly of running from one end of the world to the other without firſt obtaining your permiſſion. Nevertheleſs, the idea of Rome, of the treaſures it contains, the conviction of the infinite benefit which I ſhall derive from ſuch a journey after ſome years of aſſiduous application; all this has remained moſt ſtrongly impreſſed

impreſſed on my mind, and is a ſtrong incitement to me to redouble my efforts that I may become deſerving of ſo enviable a recompenſe. But I think that at preſent, and I believe my opinion is juſt; I receive more advantage from my reſidence here than I ſhould at Rome, at leaſt in ſtudying that ſtyle, which I have adopted. Even Kerſch could not deny the truth of my obſervation, and we ſeparated in the pleaſing proſpect of meeting again ſome time hence, in that country which is the claſſical repoſitory of the arts; as friends, whoſe deſtinies are united by their vocation.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXVIII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

Dreſden, Jan. 22, 1786.

It becomes every day more probable, my dear parents, that I ſhall have the pleaſure of ſeeing you this ſummer; and in addition to it, that alſo of bringing with me M. Graaf, and perhaps too, M. Zingg. M. Graaf has long entertained the deſign of reviſiting Switzerland and his old friends; and ſince he has conſidered it as probable, his wiſhes are converted into an ardent deſire. He thinks of it continually; and the firſt years of his youth, the firſt period of his exiſtence as an artiſt, and particularly the happy hours he paſſed in your ſociety, recur in ſuch vivid colours to his memory, and he deſcribes them to me in ſuch animated language, that our eyes often ſwim in tears during our converſation, and we wiſh time were gifted with ſwifter wings to accelerate the period of our reunion with you. Kerſch found us lately in one of theſe moments conſecrated to memory and hope, and it almoſt produced the effect of tempting him to ac-

company us into Switzerland, as I had previouſly been tempted to follow him into Italy.

My ſtudies in the gallery will occupy the reſt of the time, I ſhall remain here, although at preſent I employ great part of it in finiſhing, with the utmoſt care, the pictures, I intend for the exhibition, and of which I gave you a deſcription in my laſt. I endeavour, in the execution of them, to combine vigour with delicacy; with regard to the latter qualification, I have a very ſtrong impreſſion of the too much and the too little, yet I feel very forcibly how much I have to do before I can attain that point at which taſte acknowledges itſelf ſatisfied. I ſhall endeavour to finiſh each picture at once, for if it is neglected for ſome time, and then reſumed, the painting loſes conſiderably of its unity, and the colours are ſcarcely ever ſo blended and ſo freſh.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXIX.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, March 7, 1786.

AT length, my dear ſon, you confirm the pleaſing hope, that M. Graaf will accompany you into Switzerland; his wiſhes on this ſubject cannot be more earneſt than our own. I beg you will alſo uſe your utmoſt influence with M. Zingg to prevail on him to be of the party. But do you conſent to leave Germany without having ſeen the Pruſſian troops? You know, that I agree with all my heart to any thing, that may procure you the means of ſeeing them. I encloſe you ſome letters of introduction at Berlin from M. Orell; and I will ſend you ſome for ſome friends of mine reſiding in that city, when I ſhall be certain of your departure.

I can eaſily conceive the ſorrow you experience at the departure of your friend Kerſch, and alſo the difficulty of reſiſting ſo ſtrong a temptation as that of travelling to Rome in company with a young

artiſt of ſuch diſtinguiſhed merit; but you very properly thank your good genius for having endowed you with ſo much courage; and if you conſult it again, on whatever occaſion, it will always conduct you in the right path. With what tender affection I would embrace you, were you with me at this moment, to expreſs my ſatisfaction on your prudent deciſion between that which is moſt proper and that which is moſt agreeable; the choice, you have made on this occaſion, is alſo a convincing proof to me, that the plan you have adopted is that alſo which is beſt ſuited to you as an artiſt.

There is no occaſion for me to repeat my exhortations for you to employ your time to the beſt advantage, while you remain at Dreſden; but I muſt take this opportunity of aſſuring you in the moſt poſitive manner, that after you have paſſed ſome time at home with your family, a period which I truſt will not be waſted without deriving ſome benefit, you ſhall have the liberty not only of ſeeing Italy and Rome, but of remaining there as long as you may judge it neceſſary for the purſuing of your ſtudies.

I have not time to add any more. Your mother and your ſiſter deſire their moſt affectionate regards.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXX

C. ESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, March 12, 1786.

THE exhibition has been open ſome days; I think my pictures ſeem to pleaſe, and the military in particular examine them with attention. Beſides thoſe which I mentioned to you, I have painted a large battle-piece ſix feet high by four feet wide; it is this, which produces the greateſt effect. A party of huſſars confuſedly emerges in the midſt of a pretty briſk firing from behind a little hill; ſome dragoons attack them in their flight, and purſuing them, they engage in a furious battle: on one ſide a battery of cannon and ſome broken gabions cover the foreground; behind this battery, at the foot of the hill, is a village on fire, the flames of which riſe to a great height.

By a moſt fortunate accident I ſaw the burning of the Daniſh palace from my window, which gave me the opportunity of painting this tremendous ſight from nature. In another picture in the ſame ſtyle,

a detachment of infantry, placed in ambuſcade in a foreſt, is ſurpriſed and attacked by a ſmall body of cavalry, and ſome grenadiers are diſtinguiſhable, who, like the infernal gods, are coming forward out of a cloud of fire and ſmoke.

A Holy Family by Kerſch, and my battle pieces, are, this year alſo, the only compoſitions, which have been exhibited by ſtudents. Mine create great aſtoniſhment, for no one can conceive it poſſible, that the ſon of that poet, who conſecrates his lays to nature and to innocence, ſhould be on canvas at leaſt a very Attila. "How is it?" "Why is it?" every one enquires; and I can make no other reply to this ſtrange queſtion than "So it is." Some amateurs ſeemed to have taken a fancy to ſome of my pictures, and I had flattered myſelf they would purchaſe them; but when it came to the point, and money came in queſtion, their admiration ſuddenly vaniſhed, and I did not think it worth while to throw my works under their feet.

The drawings which I have ſent you are ſome ſketches from nature, which I have ſlightly coloured.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXI.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, April 21, 1786.

I RECEIVED both your letter and your drawings, my dear ſon, ſome days ſince; the latter gave me infinite pleaſure; I perceive you have a true perception of pictureſque objects, and that you know how to repreſent them with energy and feeling, without reſtraint or timidity. I have alſo obſerved in theſe laſt compoſitions a more detailed and determinate character and form given to each object than in your former works. In ſhort, I foreſee with much ſatisfaction, that you will ſoon be able to add elegance and preciſion to the ſpirit and force you already poſſeſs. Careful ſtudies from the moſt eſteemed works of art and from nature, and well finiſhed drawings of particular objects, are the only means which will render you maſter of theſe deſirable qualifications. The ſhort account, you have given me of the exhibition, alſo affords me great pleaſure; the praiſes you have received will animate you with freſh zeal, and I doubt not you will

make the beſt uſe of the cenſures, which have been paſſed on your pictures. I am pleaſed with the ſubjects, you have made choice of; they are grand as well as rich, and if the execution is equally good, your works muſt certainly have deſerved the attention of the public. You are right not to diſpoſe of them at too low a price; I therefore hope, I ſhall ſtill enjoy the ſatisfaction of ſeeing the greateſt part of them.

Indeed, my dear ſon, you muſt allow, that you are negligent to a moſt unpardonable degree! you never will tell me if you intend going to Berlin, and when, and how? However, at all events, I ſend you ſome introductory letters to ſeveral perſons reſiding there. You muſt by all means go to Rammler, for he would be vexed not to have ſeen my ſon. Nicolai and Bieſter will receive you with a friendly welcome, and I adviſe you to dedicate the reſt of your leiſure to Chodowiecky. I conclude you will not remain long at Berlin, and that you will return to Dreſden as ſoon as you have ſeen the troops, and whatever may be worthy of obſervation in the collections of art. I think you would do well alſo, while you ſtay in that city, to ſhew ſome of your beſt works to the artiſts and connoiſſeurs, who reſide there.

Feer has been returned here ſome days; he is now,

now, in every ſenſe of the word, a man of diſtinguiſhed merit; he deſires to be remembered to you in the moſt friendly terms. I dare ſay you flatter yourſelf, that you are ſometimes the ſubject of our converſation. Let us know as ſoon as you can, at what time M. Graaf and you propoſe ſetting out on your journey to Switzerland?

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, April 21, 1786.

It is now ſome time, my dear father, ſince I wrote you in full detail all my reaſons for reſigning my propoſed journey to Berlin; but the letter containing them, which I moſt ſincerely believed I had put into the poſt with ſome others, I found in my pocket to-day. I beg your forgiveneſs, and return you a thouſand thanks for your propoſal, which is in all reſpects very tempting; but although it would be a very conſiderable gratification to me to ſee the great Frederick, and the manœuvres of the Pruſſian army, although I have the moſt ardent deſire to become acquainted with Chodowiecky, and the reſt of your friends, who inhabit that city, yet I feel myſelf irreſiſtibly detained here by my ſtudies at the gallery, from which I cannot bear to loſe a minute of my time, and by ſome works which are not yet entirely finiſhed; beſides which I ſhall ſhortly have an opportunity of viewing the military manœuvres performed on a grand ſcale by the Saxon troops,

troops. Theſe are perhaps ſufficient reaſons to decide me to remain here; but what adds to them an irreſiſtable weight, and is in my opinion a ſufficient recompenſe for all the advantages which might have reſulted from my journey to Berlin, is the collection of antique ſtatues which is now open.

This collection, which contains the plaſter models of Mengs, was at length opened to the public two days ſince. I was one of the firſt to viſit it, and cannot deſcribe the aſtoniſhment and pleaſure I experienced on being, for the firſt time in my life, ſurrounded by ſuch ſublime objects! words cannot expreſs my ſenſations at that moment. What beauty, what majeſty, what grandeur is contained in the ſtatues of the heroes! and in all how much expreſſion and ſoul! The heads of Antinous, of Mercury, of Apollo, of Venus, and of Niobe, created in me a ſpecies of delight, which no object ever yet occaſioned. They are perfect ſpecimens of grand ideal beauty, yet they are replete with truth and nature. Theſe charming figures ſeem to live and breathe; the fable of Pygmalion, who, fixing his eyes on the ſtatue which he had juſt completed, fancied he obſerved in it a ſlight degree of animation, and conjured the gods to give it a ſoul, muſt have been verified in the authors of theſe immortal productions. I think I ſee theſe great artiſts contemplating their own works, theſe wonderful models of beauty; I conceive

ceive the aſtoniſhment they muſt feel at their own talents, and the admiration ſuch a creative faculty muſt excite in them, which appears to us an almoſt ſupernatural power.

In the group of Laocoon, how noble, yet how terrible, how natural is the expreſſion of the moſt agonizing pain! all the muſcles are extended, and all the nerves contracted, yet nothing is exaggerated, nothing is diſguſting, and the imagination of the ſpectator is ſtill at liberty to add ſomething to the labours of the artiſt. Then in the lovely group of Cupid and Pſyche, all the graces of that beautiful fiction are united in the compoſition which repreſents it. The more I examine theſe wonders of the art, the more my admiration increaſes. The inimitable exactneſs of the proportions, which alone contributes ſo large a ſhare to the high perfection of theſe models; the peculiar beauty of the detail, and the union of all in an harmonious whole, muſt have been the reſult of great exertions. Previous to the attainment of ſuch perfect and admirable excellence, the artiſts who compoſed theſe ſublime productions muſt have poſſeſſed the living image in their ſoul, and had it conſtantly floating in their mind.

After ſtudying theſe maſter-pieces of art, how inſipid are our modern affected Graces and coquettiſh Venus's.

I lived

I lived entirely in this magic world, into which I had tranſported myſelf, till yeſterday, when I found at M. Graaf's the portfolio of an artiſt who is juſt arrived from Italy. The greateſt part of the drawings contained in it are ſtudies from nature; in looking over them my deſire to viſit that divine country was renewed with freſh ardour; and the promiſe, which your laſt letter contains of gratifying my wiſh, is a favour, for which I cannot feel too grateful.

It is now very certain, that M. Graaf will accompany me into Switzerland, and we ſhall probably ſet out in the courſe of a month.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXIII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, May 24, 1786.

How happy you have made us, my dear ſon, by aſſuring us that M. Graaf will poſitively come into Switzerland with you; you muſt arrange your departure ſo that you may be here before we go to Sihlwald, which will take place in about a month. We think of nothing but the pleaſant life we ſhall lead, when you are with us, and each tries to render his fancied picture the moſt chearful. We are already taking you to the ſummit of the beautiful mountain of Albis, and conducting you into every corner of our hermitage. Henry ſeems to be the moſt ingenious in inventing new amuſements; your mother and ſiſter are not deficient on their part in providing ſuitably for the conſumption likely to take place in the cellar and the kitchen, for your mother knows us all well enough to judge how far theſe ingredients will be neceſſary to our paſtoral happineſs.

The

The reaſons, which induced you to give up your journey to Berlin, afforded me great pleaſure; they are founded on a very proper calculation of what may be moſt ſerviceable to you in your ſtudies. Continue to employ all the time you will remain at Dreſden with the ſame ſcrupulous attention, particularly thoſe hours, you ſpend in the gallery. With your bruſh in your hand ſtudy thoſe works, in which nature is ſelected with taſte, imitated with care, and repreſented with ſpirit and character. With regard to thoſe, the chief merit of which conſiſts in the compoſition and the principal forms, you may be ſatisfied with uſing only your pencil. I wiſh you particularly to ſtudy from Ruyſdael and Wouverman, for you will find very few of their works at Rome. Do not omit to obſerve in the latter how ſucceſsful he is in blending elegance and correctneſs of execution with animated and ſpirited compoſition.

Your enthuſiaſtic admiration of the antique caſts, gave me very ſincere pleaſure. How fortunate you are to poſſeſs that quick perception of beauty which will alſo guide you to grandeur of conception in the ſtyle you have choſen! The ſtatues, which made the greateſt impreſſion on your mind, are conſidered the moſt perfect of all the works of the ancients, that now remain.

If you go to the Saxon camp do not preſent your-

ſelf

ſelf there with timidity, but with a proper degree of modeſt aſſurance, and always maintain, even with your ſuperiors, an air of frankneſs and eaſe. Nothing could be more detrimental to your ſucceſs in the ſtation of life in which you are placed, than too great a ſhare of baſhfulneſs; and none but a fool would ſo far miſtake modeſty as to humble himſelf too much in the eyes of others.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXIV.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Dreſden, June 12, 1786.

M. GRAAF and I were on the point of ſetting off on our journey, when he unexpectedly received a commiſſion from the court, which will detain him here for ſome time. I could willingly quarrel with every one I meet, but that, I am afraid, would do no good. Graaf is now ſeated before his eaſel from morning till night, that he may finiſh his work as ſoon as poſſible, for he is ſtill fully determined to accompany me; and we do not give up the hope of joining you at Sihlwald towards the beginning of Auguſt. How I anticipate the pleaſures of the happy life we ſhall then enjoy; Graaf is as delighted with the thoughts of it as I am myſelf, and you cannot eaſily conceive how he daubs their Electoral Highneſſes in his haſte to be gone.

Laſt week M. Zingg, myſelf, and L——, who is juſt arrived from Rome, ſet out on a rambling expedition to draw from nature. We viſited again,

with increaſed pleaſure, thoſe romantic ſpots, which I had before compared with the landſcapes of Ruyſdael and Everdingen; and we filled our portfolios chiefly with ſtudies from trees which were diſtinguiſhed either for pictureſque form or majeſtic ſize. M. Zingg, contrary to his uſual cuſtom, finiſhed his drawings on the ſpot, in Indian ink, and he was better ſatisfied with them than he ever expreſſed himſelf to be with any of his own productions; indeed theſe drawings deſerve to be numbered amongſt his beſt.

L—— is alſo a landſcape painter, and excels particularly in compoſition. He formed his taſte in Italy, where he paſſed two years; but I think his works indicate rather a laborious application than real talent. They are painted in a pleaſing ſtyle, but do not appear to be correct imitations of nature. The trees are of grand forms, and are gracefully rounded at the extremities, but they have no diſtinctneſs of character. Can this be what is called the Italian, the grand ſtyle of painting? Grand it may be; but even ſhould its merit be proclaimed by the ſound of a trumpet, in order to raiſe its value, I ſhould never be ſeduced into admiration of it. I do not ſee it either in nature or in the works of thoſe very few artiſts, who give faithful repreſentations of nature, and whoſe ſimple and unaffected imitation of her beauties occaſion ſuch real pleaſure.

I have

I have been returned from the camp about a fortnight. I was well mounted, and met with ſome officers whom I knew, therefore I had every thing I could wiſh. I was quite in my element there; I always followed the movements of the troop, ſometimes before and ſometimes behind, according as the evolutions and manœuvres required. I confeſs I was a little alarmed the firſt time I ſaw the heavy cavalry make a charge. The ground trembled under me; the clanking of the ſwords and cuiraſſes, and the hollow ſound of the horſes trampling on the earth, formed a diſcordant and terrific noiſe like that of thunder, when it rolls over a deep and narrow valley, or between the clefts of rocks.

This ſight convinced me how infinitely ſuperior in point of truth, are the works of Borgognone and Rugendas, in which all is action and ſpirit, to the other battle painters, I have ſeen; I muſt even give them the preference in theſe ſubjects over Wouverman, who is ſo great in all others. This was a merit peculiar to Rubens alſo; in his hunting pieces for example, every thing is alive and in motion; men, dogs, horſes, every object is full of fire and action.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXV.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Sihlwald, July 6, 1786.

How dilatory you are, my dear ſon, in acquainting us of the time when you and M. Graaf are to ſet out! We have now been ten whole days at Sihlwald, and you do not yet make your appearance! We have many times fancied we heard the horn echoing among the mountains; for you will, no doubt, announce your arrival by giving us a ſpecimen of your new accompliſhment; but hitherto our expectations have been diſappointed. You muſt however be aware, that the expoſed ſituation of Sihlwald will not allow us to prolong our reſidence here later than the middle of October. I intreat you, my dear ſon, to haſten M. Graaf, and let him enjoy no peace until you are both on your journey.

I dare ſay you have faithfully put in practice the reſolution you had formed of profiting as much as poſſible from the gallery, and I anxiouſly hope that your ſtudies from the valuable originals it contains, have

have not been confined merely to ſlight and rapid ſketches; that kind of copy could only afford you imperfect ideas, which would not be of eſſential ſervice to you in ſuch works as will require to be particularly diſtinguiſhed by the merit of the execution; and the conſequence would be, that in this point which is ſo neceſſary to you, you would loſe rather than gain. I am told, that every one obſerves in you a lively and fertile imagination and a conſiderable ſhare of talent; but every one agrees alſo in wiſhing that your works were painted with more care, and that more attention were beſtowed in the finiſhing. I wiſh you to remember the following maxim, and let it ever be preſent in your mind while you are ſtudying, namely, that an artiſt ought to be negligent only in appearance. Obſerve attentively the works of great maſters in any ſtyle; and, for example, as theſe are the moſt celebrated in yours, obſerve the beſt pictures of Wouverman or of Berghem, and if you find occaſionally any ſigns of negligence you muſt at leaſt remark how rare and how trivial they are.

Juſt at the moment when I was cloſing my letter I received yours, which was full of very pleaſing intelligence, excepting only the delay which muſt take place in your journey. Endeavour, however, to haſten your departure as much as poſſible, that you

may yet enjoy Sihlwald for a few weeks in all it beauty.

I am happy to find you were ſo well ſatisfied with your viſit to the camp, and for my part, I am not leſs ſo with your laſt picturesque excurſion, in which you had ſuch good companions. You have now had opportunities of ſeeing and obſerving different methods in this ſtyle of painting, and the comments you make on them appear to me to be juſt and well founded. What is called the grand ſtyle is nothing better than quackery, if the truth and character proper to each object be ſacrificed to attain it; a painter ought certainly to chuſe the moſt beautiful forms in nature, and thoſe beſt calculated for a picture, he may add to their ſize and even improve them, but the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of each object ſhould never be changed or expreſſed indefinitely. We will talk more on this ſubject when we are together; endeavour therefore that our meeting may take place very ſhortly.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXVI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

Milan, June 2, 1787.

HERE I am again ſeparated from you, my dear parents! The buſtle of the journey, and ſome pleaſant days paſſed at Bergamo in the houſe of M. S——, with whom I could almoſt fancy myſelf at home, prevented my feeling ſo forcibly at firſt, the pangs of this freſh abſence from you; but now I am alone, and nothing but my ardent deſire to ſee Rome, and the ſtrong motives which induce me to go thither, could ſoften the painful ſenſations, which oppreſs my heart. Nevertheleſs I aſſure you, my good and worthy father, that I am fully ſenſible of the neceſſity of my reſidence in Italy; and the tender parting bleſſing of the beſt of parents, by approving of the profeſſion I have choſen, has impoſed on me the ſacred duty of labouring to the utmoſt of my power, in order that I may practiſe it with credit to myſelf and my family.

I arrived at this place yeſterday evening, and ſhall

leave it to-morrow morning. M. O—— of Bergamo, accompanied me here, and did not leave me till he had engaged a good poſtillion for me, who is to take me to Rome. Therefore, I travel alone, and as in converſation I do not expect to find a greater fund of reſources in my poſt-boy than in his mules, I have purchaſed a very handſome ſhag dog to be my companion, and I hope that in a ſhort time we ſhall be very good friends.

As I ſtay ſo ſhort a time at Milan, I ſhall not ſay much about this city, or rather I will not ſay any thing.

The route, by which I came to Bergamo, delighted me extremely, although I croſſed the Splugen during the moſt ſevere weather. The grand appearance of this maſs of mountains riſing one above another to the clouds, this gigantic appearance of nature, which I now beheld for the firſt time, made me forget the cold and all the inconveniences of the road. I contemplated with a degree of pleaſure mixed with horror, the foaming waters of the Rhine, which were rolling beneath me at the foot of a frightful precipice. The roaring of the current, added to the diſtant rumbling of ſome avalanches were the only ſounds which interrupted the mournful ſilence of winter, and rendered it ſtill more terrific.

I regretted

I regretted very much on this occaſion that I could not draw any of the objects which preſented themſelves; for in theſe romantic regions it is impoſſible to detain the horſes for any length of time; I therefore purſued my journey down the ſides of the Cardinelles, and after travelling ſome hours I found myſelf in the fertile plains of Italy, ſurrounded by all the lovelineſs of ſpring.

My poney performed this painful journey as if he had been born and bred in the mountains. I felt a great degree of regret on parting with him, and had I not been certain, that I diſpoſed of him to a good maſter, I ſhould not eaſily have conſoled myſelf for the loſs.

There are ſome good pictures diſperſed about Bergamo in the churches, and although they are in very bad preſervation, yet in ſome, one may diſcover a greatneſs and boldneſs of deſign. The collection of a Count Peternelli contains ſome fine landſcapes by Tempeſta, ſome battle pieces by Borgognone, and a ſmall Correggio. But the objects moſt worthy of particular attention, are ſome ſculpture and ornaments in the church of Alſano, a ſmall town in the vicinity of Bergamo. The figures are of wood, the deſign is in a grand ſtyle, full of expreſſion and ſpirit, and the draperies are diſpoſed with grace and ſimplicity. There are alſo ſome ſtatues in marble, which

if

if I do not miſtake, are really very fine. The pulpit is ſupported by three figures in the ſtyle of Caracci, which have as much grace as their attitude and deſtination can admit of. The proportions are maintained with the utmoſt exactneſs; the tenſion of the muſcles is expreſſed with a proper degree of ſtrength, but not exaggerated, and all thoſe parts in which the bones project, ſuch as the knees and elbows, are indicated with perfect truth. The able artiſt, who executed theſe figures, was a native of Bergamo, of the name of Fontani.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXVII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, June 13, 1787.

You will receive this letter at Rome, my dear ſon; thrice welcome to you be your arrival in that city! You are now admitted into the ſanctuary of that art, to which you have voluntarily conſecrated yourſelf; you will there ſee its moſt ſublime productions. Thoſe monuments of the moſt aſtoniſhing efforts of genius, and of the utmoſt perfection of taſte—thoſe admirable works, the ſight of which will at firſt humiliate and diſcourage you, but only to create in you afterwards the higheſt emulation and enthuſiaſm. Theſe great artiſts were but men; but always reflect how they muſt have laboured to attain the excellence which you now obſerve in them. If you mean to continue as you have hitherto done, only to follow the bent of your genius, there was no neceſſity for your viſiting Rome.

There, no doubt, the wonders of art, the beauties of

of nature, every thing, in ſhort, is calculated to excite enthuſiaſm and develope the mind; but look over the hiſtory of artiſts in former centuries; obſerve alſo thoſe painters who are ſtill living, who have raiſed themſelves to ſuperior eminence; collect all thoſe of different nations, who like you aſpire to reach that goal which our predeceſſors have attained, and who approach it with haſty ſtrides, and learn from them with what continued efforts and unremitted labour that artiſt muſt purſue his profeſſion who aims at perfection. You will doubtleſs occaſionally meet with ſome fiery ſpirits who only advance by ſudden leaps, whoſe ſenſeleſs vanity will not ſubmit to a regular though troubleſome progreſs; but you will always obſerve, that by deviating from the right path they get farther from the object inſtead of approaching it.

Loſe no time in beginning your ſtudies, and let the principal one be that of the human figure, under its moſt beautiful form; beſtow particular attention alſo on the harmony, truth, and delicacy of colouring; copy detached groups, ſingle figures, and ſometimes even parts of figures, but in theſe different ſtudies, always proceed with unremitting diligence and ſcrupulous exactneſs. In a word, exert yourſelf to the utmoſt, for you have no time to loſe.

Write

Write to us as ſoon as you can, and tell us what were the firſt impreſſions which your reſidence in Rome produced, and how you were received by our friends. I am particularly anxious to know your opinion of More. We have received your letter from Milan, which gave us infinite pleaſure. We were happy to learn that you found ſo good a maſter for your horſe; we felt much intereſted in the fate of that poor animal, and are equally ſo for the faithful dog that was your travelling companion; give him a tender embrace from us, as to a good friend, for he was truly ſo to you.

We are all in good health, and your friends deſire to be moſt kindly remembered to you. May the moſt High ever guard and preſerve you in health!

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXVIII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, June 15, 1787.

It is now ſome days ſince I arrived at Rome, after a ſafe and very pleaſant journey. I immediately haſtened to viſit my friends, Lips, Kerſch, Tiſchbein, and Trippel. The latter received me with the cordiality of a true Swiſs. I found Kerſch in the antient houſe, which was formerly occupied by Mengs; he leads a ſolitary life there, entirely removed from every thing that can diſturb him. My viſit occaſioned him an agreeable ſurpriſe, notwithſtanding he had long and impatiently expected me. What I felt on firſt entering this celebrated city; what I ſtill feel —— indeed it is impoſſible to expreſs it, for I am ſtill entirely a ſtranger to every thing that ſurrounds me, and bewildered in the amazing variety of objects that every where meets my eye. Yet I hope my ſenſations will not always remain in ſuch a confuſed ſtate. Kerſch and many others tell me that they experienced the ſame kind of confuſion when they firſt

first came to Rome; and in fact it is this superabundance of sentiments and ideas with which I almost feel oppressed at the present moment, which promises me in future the most perfect enjoyment of those prodigies of art which abound in this city.

Immediately after my arrival I was induced to visit St. Peter's, by a procession which was going to that church; the immense concourse of people which was crowding towards it from all quarters, made me apprehensive that I should not be able to remain in it without being stifled; but to my great astonishment I found the church so far from full, that on examining that vast space, in which I was comparatively almost a nonentity, I was seized with a sort of religious terror. Divine service began at this instant; solemn and majestic music echoed along the vaulted roofs of the edifice; several thousand persons waited in silent and pious expectation for the benediction of the holy father, who with arms extended towards heaven, seemed to convey it from the throne of the Deity, and shed its benign influence over the multitude. I felt myself transported beyond the limits of this earthly boundary, and in the pious emotion of my soul, I also should have fallen on my knees if other objects had not roused me from my ecstacy. But when I recovered my calmness, I cast my eyes along the immense nave, in which I stood, surrounded as it is with a quadruple row of pillars,

pillars, when I beheld the coloſſal magnitude of this edifice, not leſs admirable for the beauty of its proportions, and the perfect harmony of all its parts, than for that ſublime grandeur which almoſt terrifies the imagination, I was again overpowered with aſtoniſhment and awe. The ſenſations I felt were as new to me as the objects which inſpired them; I had no idea, that the ſight alone of bold and majeſtic architecture could have produced on the mind an impreſſion ſo vivid and delightful.

I cannot yet give you any very intereſting details of Rome; I have ſeen a great many things, and yet I have ſeen nothing. One of the firſt ſtudies, which I intend to purſue here, is that of Roman hiſtory. It is here, that one ſhould read what the Romans have done. I intreat you, my dear parents, to allow Henry to come to me, before I leave this city; he will receive more pleaſure and inſtruction from a journey hither, than he would by travelling over all the other parts of the globe.

All your friends deſire me to aſſure you of their eſteem and ſincere affection.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XXXIX.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, June 22, 1787.

I HAVE at last met with a lodging conveniently situated for painting; I have an extensive view from my window, a good light, as it faces the north, and besides this, the advantage of being so near to Sablet, that we can converse from our windows; I am much pleased at being such near neighbours. Sablet is a man of great merit in every respect, and his character is as estimable as his talents are great; in addition to this, he possesses a qualification which does not diminish my esteem for him; he smokes. His pictures, which he calls conversation pieces, are painted with exquisite taste, and unite the boldness of the Italian school with the delicate pencilling and fine colouring of the Flemish. There are also in the house, which he inhabits, some French artists who appear to me to have very superior merit; so you see I am surrounded by artists, and have sufficient choice to form a very agreeable society.

I have already paid two viſits to the celebrated Angelica Kauffman; ſhe received me in the moſt obliging manner. She is indeed a woman endowed with ſingular talent, to which ſhe joins the utmoſt diffidence. I ſaw at her houſe ſome beautiful portraits; ſhe gives a grace to the turn of her heads, which ſeems peculiar to herſelf; her ſtyle is delightful, and on this point ſhe certainly deſerves all the praiſes which are beſtowed on her. Yet, notwithſtanding all my admiration for her talents, I do not think ſhe can be placed in the ſame claſs with our Graaf. Her heads of men, at leaſt, cannot be compared with thoſe of that artiſt, who touches them with ſuch a bold and firm pencil, that his works partake of the beautiful character of Vandyck. Angelica uſually leaves them undefined, glazing them with ſoft and feeble tints, which in other reſpects produces an agreeable effect, and ſucceeds admirably. I muſt confeſs, that in her female heads it is impoſſible to deſire any thing more graceful or faſcinating. Excuſe me, my dear parents, for having ventured to paſs any cenſure on the works of this celebrated paintreſs, if however that may be called cenſure, which is an impartial compariſon of the merit of two great artiſts.

I was received with much politeneſs by counſellor Reifenſtein; I found him employed in giving a poliſh to a picture, varniſhed with wax; I had by this

this means an opportunity of obſerving the whole operation; for, excepting the preparation of the colours, he does not conceal any part of his proceſs. This is the whole detail; after he has finiſhed his picture, which appears as dry and dull as a painting in body colours, M. Reifenſtein lays over it a thick layer of melted wax, unequally ſpread over the whole; when the wax is cool, he places the picture on an eaſel, and paſſes over it ſeveral times and in different directions, a ſort of hollow ſhovel with a ſhort handle which is filled with hot cinders; this operation requires the utmoſt attention, becauſe the wax muſt be heated only as much as is neceſſary to melt it without burning, in order to ſpread it equally over the whole picture; and at laſt, to render it perfectly ſmooth with a varniſhing brush.

Reifenſtein is ſo ſure, by experience, of the durability of this kind of painting, which in fact is not a new invention, although it muſt not be claſſed with that kind, called encauſtic, that according to him neither the ſun nor damp can produce on it the ſlighteſt change. I do not yet know very deciſively whether all colours will bear this proceſs, nor which of them will ſtand it beſt; neither am I thoroughly perſuaded, that the operation itſelf is infallible; at leaſt I remarked in one landſcape ſome tones too brilliant for the diſtances, and others which I think would have been more tranſparent

in oil painting. It alſo appears to me, that the fuſion of the wax depends very much on chance, and that the leaſt inattention may deſtroy the labour of ſeveral months.

I was invited to dine with Reifenſtein at M. Hackert's, who treated us with the magnificence of a prince. The reputation, and conſequently the merit of an artiſt, are things not to be diſputed when he poſſeſſes a large fortune, for in ſuch a ſituation it is very eaſy for him to arrogate a degree of authority, which no one is inclined to conteſt with him. M. Hackert does not ſeem to be inſenſible of all the advantages, which his riches procure him. The arts were diſcuſſed at table, as well as the merit of thoſe who cultivate them. Amongſt whom ſeveral artiſts of real talent underwent a very rigorous examination. M. Reifenſtein did not fail to beſtow his approbation on every opinion that was given by our hoſt; he even contrived to introduce a ſort of compariſon between the works of M. Hackert and thoſe of ſome other painters, and did it in a manner ſo advantageous to the former, that when he afterwards ſhewed us his portfolio, I, as a young man, could not purſue any other courſe than either to admire or be ſilent. I choſe the latter, as the beſt calculated to keep me out of a ſcrape without forfeiting my frankneſs, or loſing the favour of ſo important a perſonage. Is not this the beſt method to enſure ſucceſs

in

in the world, particularly in that part of it, which is denominated the great world?

I went yesterday with Lipps to Raphael's villa; we entered the retreat of this divine artist with a sort of religious respect; it was a sanctuary in our eyes. The architectural part of the building is very simple, but the room in which Raphael used to sleep is enriched with some charming paintings in fresco. On one side of the walls he has represented the nuptials of Alexander and Roxana, and facing it, some groups of playing Cupids. Even the ceiling is decorated with the most fanciful creations of his truly poetic imagination. It is to be regretted, that these beautiful paintings are damaged in some parts, owing to the ignorance of the proprietors of the house who have allowed it to be the residence of a gardener. It also creates some degree of pain, to observe, instead of the antient simplicity of these rural scenes, all the trifling decorations of a pretended English garden, with its hillocks, its groves, and its diminutive lawns.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XL.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Sihlwald, July 17, 1787.

Upon my word, my dear ſon, you keep your promiſes like a man of honour! your letters are the delight of our life; and like bees we know how to extract a very ſweet kind of honey from them; that is to ſay, many obſervations much to your advantage. I remarked with ſincere pleaſure in your laſt letter, that you know how to unite prudence with the livelineſs of your ſentiments, which I have been able to obſerve in your behaviour towards Hackert and Reifenſtein. This line of conduct is in fact the only one that can be purſued with people of that character. There is a wide difference between a baſe flatterer and a man who, without committing his own dignity, has ſufficient prudence to avoid offending the ſelf love of others; an error which many are liable to, and particularly ſeveral artiſts, who either by a fooliſh vanity, or in conſequence of a defective education, injure themſelves by unneceſſarily creating enemies. In the choice of

of your ſociety, my dear ſon, be always cautious with regard to the character and morals of thoſe with whom you wiſh to be acquainted, that too much confidence in the ſolidity of your own principles may never lead you to form imprudent connexions. A man of depraved ſentiments may have brilliant and even amiable qualities; he may be poſſeſſed of diſtinguiſhed talents and extenſive knowledge; but it is preciſely theſe qualities, which render him more dangerous as an acquaintance. The only method you could adopt with a man of that deſcription would be to do juſtice to his talents on every occaſion, but to avoid intimacy with him. We feel truly happy at the good reception you have met with from our friends. The manner, in which you have characterized ſome of them proves a juſt diſcrimination, and gave me great pleaſure. I could not wiſh any thing better for you than your vicinity to Sablet and the other French artiſts; your acquaintance with them will tend to overcome thoſe unſocial prejudices which too often form a barrier between the Germans and the French, and will alſo furniſh you with opportunities of improving in a language, the knowledge of which will ever be uſeful to you. The accompliſhment of ſmoking, which Sablet unites with his other acquirements, is no doubt a great merit in your eyes: much good may it do you both! nevertheleſs be wiſe, and keep on your guard. In ſuch a climate as that of Italy, the practice of

ſmoking muſt heat you very conſiderably; heat occaſions thirſt; in ſhort, my child, remember that even the moſt robuſt ſhould not trifle with their health.

How fortunate you are to have met with ſo many friends, whoſe talents and enthuſiaſtic admiration of their art will continually excite your zeal and increaſe your activity! I am fully perſuaded, that you will draw ſome profit from every thing that can contribute to your improvement. Let one of your firſt objects be to procure the means of ſtudying the fineſt horſes from nature; for I adviſe you always to adhere to the ſtudy of nature in preference, yet not to neglect obſerving in the great maſters the beſt manner of giving each object its peculiar character. I wiſh you to inform me circumſtantially what plan you intend to purſue in your ſtudies; tell us alſo of your domeſtic arrangements, whether you eat alone or with your friends? In ſhort, do not be ſparing of your details, for every thing intereſts us.

Have you ſeen More, and are you pleaſed with him? Give us ſome particulars concerning him, and alſo about Meyer and Kölla.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XLI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, July 18, 1787.

I AM at this moment arrived from Tivoli, to which place I went with Troll; and I have brought with me a few drawings, although the exceſſive heat of the weather would not admit of our paſſing the whole time in drawing. Trippel and I have formed the project of going to that delightful ſpot to paint from nature, but not till the great heats are over.

At Tivoli nature wears a heavenly aſpect. The views, which every where ſtrike the eye, are all finiſhed pictures, which remind of the compoſitions of Pouſſin. The temple of Veſta, one of the fineſt ruins that can be beheld, and of which you have a model in your poſſeſſion, is ſituated in the garden of the inn, where all the artiſts take up their abode. There they aſſemble at noon to dine under arbours covered with vines, and meet again in the ſame ſpot

at

at night. In this place, enjoying the refreſhing coolneſs of evening under an unclouded ſky, the time is paſſed in ſport and feſtivity, animated by all the vivacity which artiſts may indulge in; and on this claſſic ground, in the vicinity of that Tiber, which was ſo dear to Horace, and of Mecenas's villa, the recollection of paſt ages adds to the charms of the preſent moment.

The feſtival of St. Peter was celebrated to-day; and on this occaſion the princes and nobles diſplay the utmoſt magnificence; they go to church in the moſt ſumptuous equipages, drawn by horſes ſuperbly decorated. The pope's troops follow, who do not make ſo brilliant an appearance. The cavalry parades in the moſt groteſque confuſion; one has only ſtockings, while another has boots that are not fellows; the horſes walk as ſlowly as if they were dragging the plough: in ſhort the whole forms a ſpectacle as novel as it is ridiculous.

In Rome one frequently meets with the moſt ſtriking contraſts; by the ſide of the fineſt productions of painting and architecture, you often ſee the moſt diſguſting ſpecimens of bad taſte; in one ſpot all the pomp of opulence diſplays itſelf, cloſe to it all the miſeries of poverty obtrude themſelves on the eye;

eye; in the ſtreets beings, whoſe very aſpect appals the ſoul, lie on the threſhold of palaces, &c.

The moſt beautiful part of this feſtival is the ſpectacle which cloſes the day; and indeed all Rome looks forward to it with anxious expectation. In the evening the cupola of St. Peter's church is illuminated. There are torches placed on the baluſtrade, which are lighted as ſoon as it grows duſk; the ſignal is given by the ſound of a bell, and in an inſtant the whole cupola appears in a flame. The coloſſal maſſes of the church and the other buildings which ſurround it, illumined in various ways by this immenſe maſs of light, preſent a ſpectacle of the moſt ſingular and ſtriking nature. The multitude, which crowds from every quarter to behold this ſight, produces a number of whimſical groups which are varying every minute. They ſeem to undulate like waves, at one time illumined by the moſt vivid brightneſs, at another loſt in total obſcurity. At midnight a ſuperb firework, played from the caſtle of St. Angelo in honour of the triumph of the church, terminates with becoming dignity the feſtivities of the day.

But all the feſtivals and all the fireworks in the world would never afford me half the gratification I experienced from my viſit to More. He had not, indeed,

indeed, leiſure to converſe long with me, when I called on him, but I was fully recompenſed by being allowed to remain in his ſtudy quite at my eaſe. Four pictures particularly ſtruck me; the two firſt repreſent a ſunriſe and a ſunſet; the third a tempeſt at ſea, of good colouring and the moſt terrific effect; the fourth, the deluge. In the latter nothing is ſeen but ſky and water, and a few rocks, which here and there appear; yet the combination of colour produces altogether a ſtriking effect. A picture repreſenting an eruption of Mount Etna, pleaſed me leaſt, although it poſſeſſes infinite merit; but a maſs of fire alone, without the concurrence of other objects to interrupt the uniformity of its colour, can never, I think, excite great intereſt, nor produce a very ſtrong impreſſion. More excels principally in colouring; the eye repoſes with pleaſure on his beautiful ſkies which boaſt a truly aerial tranſparency; his thorough knowledge of perſpective enables him to produce the moſt enchanting harmony in his landſcapes; his trees are characteriſed with perfect truth; his water is brilliant and limpid, and for a landſcape painter his figures are very tolerably drawn. It appears to me, that the manner in which he glazes his half tints contributes materially to the beauty of his colouring.

I begin to feel myſelf at home in this city, and by degrees

degrees become acquainted with the beauties which every part offers to my eyes. Soon after my arrival I went to ſee the gallery of pictures belonging to prince Borgheſe. The moſt celebrated picture in this collection is the entombing of Chriſt by Raphael. The deſign, compoſition, and an inexpreſſible clearneſs of colouring, have induced connoiſſeurs to claſs this exquiſite painting with the fineſt productions of the art. A ſmall Madona with the infant Jeſus, and an angel on each ſide holding a torch, is well known to you by the drawing of it which Lips ſent you; the moſt exquiſite grace, and an expreſſion of virgin innocence, are diffuſed over the countenance of the mother; and the child is not inferior in beauty. There are alſo in this collection ſome very fine Titians; the head of Ceſar Borgia in particular, claims admiration, and while contemplating its excellence, even ſome charming Vandycks which are near it loſe their attraction. If Titian had united the drawing of Raphael with the magic of his colouring he would have been the firſt painter in the world.

My mind filled with the higheſt expectations I repaired to the Seſtini chapel. When I entered the building, I thought the ſpirit of Michael Angelo appeared before me in majeſtic grandeur, and filled me with profound reſpect. What a boldneſs and fire

fire of imagination is displayed in his picture of the Last Judgment! The dead appear to be actually rising from the earth, and disengaging themselves from their winding sheets, to rise in varied groups towards heaven. The spectator is seized with terror on beholding the damned precipitated into the dreadful abyss, which opens its jaws to receive them. What animation and richness in the composition! and in what energetic and terrific forms the work of destruction is offered to the eye! This painting, considered in all points, is perhaps the greatest effort of the art; and in fact who can be compared with Raphael and Michael Angelo? The same great genius also displays itself in the decorations on the walls and ceiling of the chapel, although under the most varied forms; yet the same grandeur and simplicity of outline pervades the whole of these works, which in a great measure approaches the ideal beauty of the ancients.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XLII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, Aug. 1, 1787.

THE gallery of prince Doria contains among other valuable pictures, three Claudes which are eſteemed ſome of the beſt productions of this maſter: and alſo ſome of the fineſt of Pouſſin; the Flight into Egypt is one of the three firſt. The Holy Family is repoſing by the ſide of a rivulet which flows through a foreſt. The ſetting ſun ſpreads a glowing tint over the trunks of the trees, and its rays paſſing between their branches are reflected in the water, which produces a very ſingular illuſion. The dark colouring of the trees contraſted with the brilliancy of the ſky, which appears through the interſtices of the foliage, adds to its effect, and gives it almoſt the appearance of fire. This picture preſents every varied tint of green, yet the moſt perfect harmony reigns through the whole. The trees are finely drawn, and their forms well choſen. The ſecond picture is a ſunſet, in which that orb is juſt ſinking into the ocean; a charming painting repleto with

with effect. The extent of the water occupies more than half the height of it, and although it appears all of one colour, and perfectly calm, yet the effect produced by the rays of the ſun reflected in different ways from its ſurface, and by the progreſſive gradation of tints which mingle with the ſky in an aeriel vapour, extends the limits of the horizon to the diſtance of ſeveral miles. Some majeſtic rocks form a barrier to the ſea on one ſide, and ſome large trees occupy the foreground. The ſubject of the third is morning in its earlieſt progreſs. A lake of tranſlucent water is edged with tufts of trees, through the dark foliage of which, ſome mountains are viſible, which melt into a grey diſtance; all the objects appear tinted by the freſh vapour of morning. The foreground is ornamented with ſome beautiful architectural buildings, and the whole is ſo highly finiſhed as to be a perfect illuſion. The compoſition, the choice of objects, every part in ſhort is of exquiſite taſte, and even in the ſmalleſt blade of graſs a ſtrict attention to nature is diſcernible.

I have already told you, that this collection contains two landſcapes by Pouſſin. Some ſketches by this artiſt and ſome engravings from his pictures, is nearly all that is known of his works in Germany, and thoſe who judge of his talents from theſe ſpecimens, muſt in fact ſuppoſe him a mannerift, particularly when compared with Claude Lorraine.

But

But thoſe of his pictures, which are finiſhed, are replete with an exquiſite feeling of the beauties of nature; and in compoſition, he ſometimes riſes to epic ſublimity. He has neither a ſuperior nor a rival. Claude poſſeſſes the undefinable charms of chearfulneſs and elegance. Pouſſin has more grandeur and dignity. Claude is the Corregio of landſcape painters, while Pouſſin is the Michael Angelo. The former ſurpaſſes every one in excellence of execution; but many works of the latter are particularly admirable for a true and vigorous colouring. But to return to thoſe of his pictures, which enrich the Doria gallery. One repreſents a ſtorm; ſome ſhepherds are haſtily coming down an excavated road, and driving their flocks towards a foreſt, which appears to be violently agitated by the tempeſt. This painting contains a fire and energy peculiar to itſelf, and fear is imprinted on the countenances of the figures with great truth of expreſſion.

I have this moment received your excellent letter of the 17th of July, for which I have been long in anxious expectation. You enquire after Meyer and Kölla; they are perſons diſtinguiſhed for their talents and induſtry. I have ſeen ſome heads by them in the manner of Seidelman, which might well ſuſtain a compariſon with thoſe of that artiſt. M. Trippel even gives them the preference in point of

correctneſs in drawing. They live together in the moſt perfect harmony, totally ſecluded from the world, and very frequently work together indiſcriminately on the ſame performance. They both return you many thanks for the intereſt you feel for them.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XLI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, Aug. 17, 1787.

I AM continually changing my lodging; I am just going to take poſſeſſion of a new one. Sablet and I have hired a pretty little houſe, in which we are to live together. We are to be our own cooks, houſekeepers, and butlers, and each of us is to take the charge of the houſekeeping alternately. Sablet has initiated me in the art of turning the ſpit, and of baſting the meat with the gravy, and my progreſs already does credit to my maſter. We have an old woman to aſſiſt us in the leſſer details, and we live together like two friars in a cloyſter, only with more pleaſure and chearfulneſs. I am certain, my dear father, you would be delighted with our little arrangements, and you would do honour to our dinner. I have beſides another advantage; from the windows of my apartment I have an uninterrupted view of the country and the vineyards which are ſcattered over it, and I can ſtudy ſkies and trees without going out of my houſe. This will be very uſe-

ful to me in many reſpects. Sablet is fond of order, and is a good economiſt, and on this point he gives me ſome good advice; he alſo obliges me always to converſe either in French or Italian. Drouet has alſo a ſhare in our ſtudy; he is a very amiable young Frenchman, who paints hiſtory; and Mr. Denis, a very able Flemiſh landſcape painter, lives cloſe to our door. Every evening we have an aſſemblage of artiſts, all men of talent, which forms quite an academy, we laugh and amuſe ourſelves, and chatter like magpies on the arts, and we are as happy as if we were in Paradiſe.

Yet, notwithſtanding I feel ſo comfortable in many reſpects, I am often dejected and diſcouraged, when I conſider all the difficulties which are ſtill to be conquered, before I can riſe even to mediocrity in my art; and if I did not feel conſcious, that my whole ſoul is engroſſed by it, that through the medium of that alone I view and ſtudy nature; if this reflection did not give me ſome degree of confidence, and encourage me to hope that I was born a painter, I believe I ſhould deſpair of ever becoming one. I cannot well account for a ſingular change, which ſeems to have taken place in me. I feel diſguſted with the ſtyle I have adopted; the reaſon may be becauſe I find but few good models for it in Rome, and that excepting only the maſterpieces of the ancient artiſts, the number of which is very ſmall, there

ter are but few pictures in that ſtyle which, reach beyond mediocrity. At the ſame time I am well aware how dangerous it is to deviate from one's own ſphere; I have various examples before my eyes of young artiſts, particularly Germans, who, from being tolerably good landſcape painters, have become very bad hiſtorical painters, and who inſtead of delighting your eyes with beautiful views and ſmiling ſcenes, diſguſt you with dropſical Venus's and contemptible Alexanders. M. ——, for example, who certainly poſſeſſes ſome talent, would have been far more reſpectable had he continued to paint his pigs, a ſtyle in which he had peculiar merit, than to daub over hiſtorical caricatures. How many painters ſtudy the antique without comprehending it, and will never be able to paint any thing but ſtatues devoid of ſoul and expreſſion. For my part, the ſmalleſt object in which I can trace nature, has more charms in my eyes than theſe mutilated and inanimate compoſitions, which neither intereſt my feelings nor engage my attention. Both H. Roos and Berghem ſtudied at Rome, yet each continued in that particular line which he had choſen. The former applied himſelf to the ſtudy of landſcape, of works of architecture, and of the fine flocks which here preſented themſelves to his eye, and he became a great painter. The other imitated nature with equal correctneſs; the mountains which ſurround me, the atmoſphere in which I live, appear to me

every fine evening, as I have obſerved them in his pictures.

In general, the maſters of the Flemiſh ſchool, conſidered as painters, may, I think, without diſadvantage, be placed in competition with thoſe of the Italian ſchool; and excepting only the very few great men who have adorned the latter, I ſhould even give the preference to the Flemiſh. The too frequent neglect of colouring, and the ſtudied ſtyle of the Italian maſters, makes the eye return with increaſed pleaſure to the natural ſimplicity of the others. Yet it muſt be confeſſed, that the great maſters in the hiſtorical line which the Italians boaſt of, have united all the principal parts of the art. I admire above all, the grandeur and ſimplicity of their compoſition. A ſmall number of figures, but thoſe carefully drawn and deeply ſtudied, are ſufficient for them to compoſe an admirable picture. Every thing ſpeaks and acts; every part is full of animation and ſoul. They never make uſe of ſuch additions as are merely intended to fill up a ſpace, yet no unpleaſant vacancy offends the eye. On the contrary, in what modern artiſts call great compoſitions, the canvas is indeed filled to its utmoſt extent with ſome dozen of figures and an infinity of acceſſory details; but theſe figures neither ſay nor do any thing, and one ſeeks in vain in ſuch an inſignificant aſſemblage for that harmony and unity, which delights

delights the eye and engroſſes the mind. But, indeed, this is the great ſecret of the art, and there are very few who are in poſſeſſion of it; to riſe to ſo elevated a height, one ſhould have the genius of a Raphael, the creative imagination of a Michael Angelo, and the magic pencil of a Correggio. When I read the catalogue of hiſtorical painters, and obſerve how rare are the inſtances of real excellence, I feel very forcibly the abſurdity of my wiſh to depart from the line I have choſen. Beſides which, this ſtyle is undoubtedly ſuſceptible of improvement.

A fine horſe and a good figure, placed in a well-ſelected landſcape, immediately makes an agreeable picture, and it is my buſineſs to add life and intereſt to it by introducing action. Inſtead of theſe objects, paint a cart horſe on a heap of ſand. This picture, if it be well executed, will always poſſeſs ſome merit, at leaſt that of truth and nature; but it will not be intereſting, and will ever create regret that ſuch a ſubject ſhould have coſt ſo much labour; unleſs a Wouverman had treated it with his exquiſite taſte, and the natural graces of his pencil, and thus made it a ſubject, that muſt intereſt the mind as well as attract the eye. But, in my opinion, the art of chooſing objects, and that of repreſenting them correctly, are two principal requiſites, the union of which alone conſtitutes a great painter.

I am very desirous, my dear father, of knowing your ideas and decision on these points, which are of such material importance to me, although I flatter myself I can already guess your opinion. Trippel is, like me, convinced, that every one should continue firm to the first impulse of his genius. E—— also reanimates my ardour for the style I have adopted, and strongly encourages me to persevere in that line, which I have hitherto preferred.

The study of the human figure, and of anatomy, will henceforth be my principal object, at the same time I shall not neglect working from nature and from the antique, and I shall also occasionally make some finished studies from Raphael. Thus, by redoubling my efforts, I flatter myself I shall be able to reap some advantage from my residence in Rome, and to approach nearer to the great object of my ambition, that of rendering myself worthy, as an artist, of the title of your son.

I have many kind wishes for you from Angelica, Trippel, Meyer, &c. &c.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XLIV.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Sihlwald, Aug. 30, 1787.

ALL your letters have reached us in ſafety, my dear ſon, and it has given us great pleaſure to find, that you have made ſuch good economical arrangements with M. Sablet. We are equally ſenſible with you of your good fortune in being intimate with a man ſo worthy of your attachment and eſteem, and I know you both well enough to be certain, that the moſt perfect harmony will ever ſubſiſt between you. I have received a letter from him containing the moſt affectionate expreſſions towards you as well as towards myſelf. I adviſe you to avail yourſelf of his counſel on all occaſions, but particularly in what relates to the management of colours. You will ſee many French at his houſe; that is an advantage with reſpect to the language, which is abſolutely neceſſary to you; but you are already well acquainted with the character of the French; the frivolity and vivacity, ſo common to the

the generality of that nation, often render them incapable of attending ſeriouſly to ſtudies which require ſteadineſs. Many of them are very eloquent in their diſſertations, but their works are not of equal merit with their orations; ſuch as theſe may amuſe you, but ought never to lead you aſtray. Keep firmly to Trippel and More; they are neither eloquent reaſoners nor flowery ſpeakers, but you will find them poſſeſſed of profound knowledge, and a pure ſentiment of truth and beauty, which indeed they do not diſplay in their converſations, but which always appear in their works.

Take advantage as much as you can of the beautiful view, you have from your windows; ſtudy the varieties of the day and of the ſeaſons, and the different accidents of light; obſerve alſo particularly the ſky. You would do well to have always about you ſome ſheets of prepared paper; it is convenient for ſlight ſketches, and it poſſeſſes the advantage of being eaſily carried. You know what good effect a well painted ſky produces on a landſcape.

I have received a moſt obliging and affectionate letter from the amiable Angelica, in which ſhe ſays that it will give her real pleaſure to be uſeful to you. Do not neglect her; for ſhe is on all ac-

counts a woman of very ſuperior merit, and her ſociety muſt be extremely intereſting. It is ſaid, that ſhe ſhews peculiar talent on the Harmonica; have you heard her yet? In all my ſolitary moments, I tranſport myſelf to Rome with you, and my heart is ſoftened by the pureſt delight, when I think of your good fortune; and good fortune indeed it is to find yourſelf, immediately on your arrival, ſurrounded by ſome of the moſt eſtimable characters, men of the higheſt talents, who receive you with open arms.

I was not much ſurpriſed at the dejection, you mention, and the ſort of diſguſt, you ſometimes feel towards the ſtyle, which you have choſen; in fact, I expected it; in the firſt place, becauſe not finding at Rome ſpecimens of that kind, either in nature or in works of art, you are deprived of what might render your labours more eaſy to you; and in the ſecond, becauſe the contemptible arrogance and unjuſt diſdain with which an hiſtorical painter, even of the moſt mediocre merit, contemplates thoſe who follow other departments of the art, may eaſily make you wavering with reſpect to the opinion you entertain of your own. What you ſay yourſelf on this ſubject, is true, well conſidered, and exactly in conformity with my own ſentiments. There are none, or at leaſt very few,

examples

examples of really great hiſtorical painters who have ſhewn ſuch an abſurd faſtidiouſneſs, and many of them have even exerciſed themſelves in other ſtyles. Whoever inſpires me with pleaſing, lively, or elevated ſenſations by a good imitation of nature, be the object what it may, ſurely deſerves my admiration. Is not the fame of Anacreon as laſting as that of Homer? Who does not admire the eclogues of Virgil almoſt as much as his Eneid? Even Thomſon, in his poem of the Seaſons, in which he paints the varied ſcenes of nature in ſuch vivid colours, is, at leaſt in my opinion, a much greater poet than in his tragedies. I confeſs, that in juſtice we ſhould give the higheſt rank to that ſtyle, which requires the greateſt efforts of genius and the deepeſt fund of knowledge; but how few in this claſs have riſen to perfection! thouſands of hiſtorical pictures will be taken from their places to make room for a Claude or a Ruyſdael, or any other painter, who imitating faithfully the moſt delightful appearances of nature, or the peaceful and engaging ſcenes of domeſtic life, makes you feel indifferent to all the grimaces of a pompous hero, and attracts your attention by the charms of grace and truth. Have courage then, my ſon, and let not what you have already done be loſt; continue in that ſtyle, to which your natural genius inclined you, and purſue the plan which you have traced for yourſelf; it is an

excellent

excellent one, and I would on no account alter it. Perhaps it may be difficult for you to get opportunities of ſtudying fine horſes from nature, but you muſt uſe all means to obtain them, yet without neglecting other animals, which may be ſerviceable to you in ſcenes of a more placid kind.

You feel dejected and diſheartened by the painful idea of numerous inſurmountable obſtacles, when you conſider the greater difficulties of the art; you well may, and I do not wonder at it: your deſcription of the pictures of Pouſſin and Claude Lorrain, and your general opinions prove to me, that you ſee and feel the beauties of your art in their fulleſt extent; but the contemplation of thoſe beauties ought only to encourage you to proceed with indefatigable zeal, without diſguiſing to yourſelf any difficulty, yet at the ſame time without being intimidated by any. Endeavour, by the conſtant contemplation and ſtudy of nature, and the great maſters, to elevate your mind to that point which may be conſidered ſupreme beauty in the abſtract; you never will attain it in your works, but it will always tempt you to proceed farther. No doubt even Raphael himſelf had moments of diſſatisfaction, and his imagination frequently preſented to him more than his pencil could execute; a ſenſation, which certainly thoſe do not experience, who place themſelves before the

Apollo,

Apollo, hum a tune, and gaily begin to draw it, fancying that they ſucceed to admiration in the expreſſion, when they have given it the air of an opera dancer; nor thoſe who ſay of the ſchool of Athens, by Raphael, "Upon my word, that is pretty, very pretty, but rather too heavy;" and then taking out a pencil and paper, draw a few "ſpirited touches," and are delighted with their own performance; nor even thoſe German genius's who, crumbling to duſt with a coloſſal tread all the difficulties, and inwardly ſenſible of their ſtrength, riſe with a rapid flight beyond all the rules of the art, and after all are nothing better than fools.

Tell me candidly, what has been ſaid of my landſcape. You know that I endeavour to profit from intelligent criticiſms. What does More think of it? You may now ſay with ſome certainty, whether a letter of recommendation to him would be of any ſervice to you. Tell me what Lips and Kerſch are doing; remember me to them, and alſo to Meyer and Kölla. The intelligence you give me of them affords me infinite pleaſure. Preſent my kindeſt regards to Meſſrs. Sablet and Trippel, and to Madame Kaufmann, and aſſure them of my grateful eſteem. But if, in reading this long letter over your ſtew-pan, you ſhould forget to ſtir your fire, and let your meat burn: Alas, what a misfortune! I think I ſee

you

you with your ſhovel in one hand and your pallet in the other, ſtraining your neck to look into the ſaucepan. Farewell, I will not diſturb you, and will only repeat, that I love you moſt affectionately; your mother, Dorothy, and Henry, all three join in the ſame aſſurance of regard.

S. GESSNER.

Sihlwald, Aug. 30, 1787.

I AM, as well as your father, my dear ſon, perfectly ſatisfied with your conduct; and I will add a few lines to his very inſtructive and intereſting letter, which you will receive with your uſual affection. I muſt always repeat the ſame thing to you; continue as you have begun. You were born with talent, for which I often return thanks to Providence with a heart overflowing with gratitude; but the uſe you make of this gift, your aſſiduity in your ſtudies, your noble ambition to render yourſelf worthy of your father, all this is your own merit, and it is for this that I love you with the moſt tender affection. I do not ſet leſs value on that natural goodneſs of heart, and on thoſe honourable ſentiments which every line in your letter diſplay. Endeavour to add prudence to your other good qualities, and you will make as much progreſs

in

in the true manly character as you do in your art.

I am rejoiced, that you ſtill feel ſo diſtant from the original you wiſh to copy; nature muſt go its ordinary courſe, and I flatter myſelf that my children are very far removed from what the world calls prodigies. If Pouſſin and Claude Lorrain could ſee with what admiration and enthuſiaſm you contemplate their works, and how humiliated and diſcouraged you afterwards feel at the diſtance that is interpoſed between you, they would no doubt ſmile at their youthful admirer, ſeeing him on the ſame road which they had themſelves traverſed.

I beg you to thank M. Sablet in my name for having taken you into his houſe. Since I have known the intimacy that ſubſiſts between you and this excellent man, I am much more eaſy on your account. Imitate his conduct as an artiſt, and habituate yourſelf from his example to the practice of order and economy. But I muſt hint to you by the way, that I think, notwithſtanding all his economy, he has a ſeal in his poſſeſſion and makes uſe of it too, while you, when you ſeal your letters, are obliged, no doubt, to borrow a farthing from your old houſekeeper. I intreat you to buy yourſelf a ſeal, and not to ſend us any more epiſtles, ſealed with the papal arms.

Make

Make my beſt reſpects to Madame Kaufman, and tell her how ſenſibly I feel the kindneſs with which ſhe mentions me in her letter to your father.

J. GESSNER.

LETTER XLV.

C. GESSNER TO HIS PARENTS.

Rome, Sept. 1, 1787.

THIS is the firſt time, my dear parents, that you have deprived me for ſo long a time of the pleaſure of hearing from you. I truſt, however, that you are all in good health. For my part, I begin to breathe again now that the heat diminiſhes; although it was almoſt inſupportable, yet I ſuffered leſs from it than many others. The greateſt part of the Germans, who are here, caught a fever, but I continue well and active. Genelli, the landſcape painter, has been ill ever ſince his arrival, and his diſorder has obliged him to refrain almoſt entirely from ſtudy, which has been very detrimental to him, for it is more difficult here than at any other place, for a young artiſt, whatever talents he may poſſeſs, to make his way through the crowd, and turn them to ſome account. Here are ſo many clever artiſts; beſides which, at Rome as well as elſewhere, chance often does more than real merit. It is a great pity that Genelli's illneſs prevents the progreſs

progreſs he would otherwiſe have made. I ſaw a landſcape at his houſe, which diſplays great talent; the compoſition is good, and there is much grandeur of thought in the ſubject. He and his brother both ſpeak with great pleaſure of the happy days they have paſſed in your ſociety.

I am at preſent employed with all poſſible application and attention, on the ſtudy of landſcape, and of the human figure, as I told you in my laſt letter. Italy is perhaps, the moſt favourable of all countries for the former, particularly for the various appearances of the ſky. Nature every where appears under ſuch grand and pompous, yet at the ſame time ſuch ſmiling features! The conſtant ſight of this beautiful ſtyle of nature, and the daily contemplation of the highly finiſhed works of Claude, and the grand compoſitions of Pouſſin, increaſe my inclination for landſcape painting, and excite me to redoubled efforts to overcome the deficiencies in my execution.

I alſo begin to loſe that reſtleſs anxiety, which induced me to paint over my pictures repeatedly, and often made me deviate from the right path. I hope I ſhall ſoon retain no more than the ſufficient quantity to give animation to my labours, and energy to my pencil. I now feel all the difference that exiſts between that fire which, like an heap of

ſtraw, blazes with brilliancy, but is ſoon extinguiſhed, and that which animated the beautiful colouring of Claude Lorraine, which inſpired Pouſſin with thoſe truly poetic ideas, and without which productions of art muſt ever remain imperfect. I am at preſent employed on a landſcape, which I think may do me ſome credit.

The French ſtudents have juſt opened their exhibition of pictures. There are ſome amongſt them, who this year have ſhewn conſiderable merit, and who may very fairly diſpute the palm with the Germans. Their works prove how much they have profited by their reſidence at Rome. I remarked among others a ſmall picture, the ſubject of which is Jacob and Rachael, by a young artiſt of the name of Gauffier. The figures are about ſix inches high, grouped with taſte, well drawn, and beautifully coloured. The back ground appears as if painted by a profeſſed landſcape painter, which I have not obſerved in any hiſtorical picture I have yet ſeen. The ſheep are worthy of the pencil of Roos. This picture is remarkable for its beautiful compoſition, fine colouring, and pure taſte. I have obſerved ſome good colouring in others of the ſtudent's pictures, and alſo ſome parts well expreſſed, but in general ſuch an exaggerated execution of the detail, that, even in the moſt quiet attitudes, every vein is ſwelled, and projects from the ſkin like a cord. In ſculpture, an excellent copy from the antique deſerves the moſt admiration:

miration: It is a girl ſeated, and playing with dice; this figure is full of nature, and the artiſt has been very ſucceſsful in ſeizing the true expreſſion of the antique. There is alſo a dying gladiator, which poſſeſſes ſome merit in the execution; but its ridiculous attitude entirely robs it of the praiſe which it deſerves. The artiſt was probably deſirous of producing ſomething new, and has given his gladiator ſuch a piteous look, and turned up his eyes to heaven with ſuch an air of contrition, that, inſtead of a brave and intrepid combatant, he looks like a poor cobler in the laſt agonies, recommending his dying ſpirit to his Creator.

M. Denis has juſt finiſhed a landſcape, which does great credit to his talents; he is doubtleſs one of the firſt painters in his ſtyle; he has ſtudied a variety of Flemiſh artiſts in his own country, and this circumſtance, in addition to an enlightened taſte, is an advantage of great importance, even at Rome. He deſires me to give you his friendly regards.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XLVI.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Sept. 26, 1787.

I REMARK from your letter of the 1ſt September, that by reaſoning yourſelf, and attending to the reaſons of others, you are every day receding farther from the ſtyle of painting, which you had choſen for yourſelf. But remember, that the day may come when you will wiſh to return to it, and that, in order to be able to reſume it, you muſt not forget what you at preſent know. I acknowledge that if you can draw the human figure correctly, it will be immaterial to you whether you cover it with a uniform or with any other dreſs; but for a battle piece, it is not leſs neceſſary to know how to delineate a horſe with the movements and attitudes peculiar to that animal; this therefore is a ſtudy eſſential to you, and you muſt perſevere in it. From all the conjectures I can form, I preſume you will at length determine to follow either the ſtyle of Wouverman or of Berghem, and adding, what indeed is no eaſy taſk, more grandeur in the choice

choice of objects, particularly in the figures. This ſhould be your aim, my dear ſon, exert yourſelf then to attain it. Take example from Trippel, in obſerving and feeling the beauty, the ſimplicity, and the grandeur of the antique; ſtudy the ſecrets of colouring in Titian as well as in nature; and in Claude and Pouſſin, a great and noble ſtyle of landſcape. Do not either neglect the Flemiſh ſchool, which, perhaps degraded by the vulgar objects it frequently repreſents, poſſeſſes nevertheleſs the excellence of a ſtrict adherence to truth and nature. I muſt alſo repeat the advice I gave you once before, of taking advantage of the view you have from your window. Make uſe, as much as poſſible, of every effect of light or intereſting appearance that the ſky may preſent to your eyes, and do not ſuffer it to eſcape without ſome profit; a painter can ſtudy every where. I have ſometimes ſeen artiſts in company, who, while accident preſented to them the moſt beautiful groups, and the light either of day, or of the candles formed the moſt pictureſque effects, were the whole time converſing about the emperor or the pope, without paying the leaſt attention to what was under their eyes; indeed I could have beaten them heartily. An artiſt not only may, but ought to be, an artiſt in every place; he can be ſo without making himſelf ridiculous, or indeed without being even remarked. It is thus that I have obſerved Graaf ſtudying in the countenances

of thoſe he met in large parties, thoſe tranſient tones and delicate ſhades of colour, which a thouſand other portrait painters never even perceived.

I am very impatient to know whether you have copied any thing from Claude Lorraine, or from Pouſſin.

Meyer's brother has an angel's head drawn and coloured by himſelf and Kölla, the ſight of which gave me infinite pleaſure. Remember me kindly to thoſe worthy men.

Tell me exactly where your houſe is, that I may find out the ſituation of it in my large map of Rome.

I encloſe a letter from our celebrated hiſtorian, Müller, to M. de Lucchefini. It contains a favourable recommendation of you, that you may by his means obtain admiſſion to the prince Borgheſe and his gallery. You ſee, my dear ſon, I omit nothing. Have you been introduced yet to the cardinal de Bernis? How do you ſtand with More? Do you ſee Angelica frequently? Do not forget my remembrance to her, to Sablet, &c. Accept my moſt tender regards.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XLVII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Marino, Oct. 27, 1787.

YOUR two laſt letters, my dear father, produced the beſt effect poſſible on me. For ſome time paſt my head had been ſo full of ideas, that I had no clear ones, and in this confuſion I wanted to accompliſh too many things at once. I wiſhed to try my abilities ſometimes in one ſtyle and ſometimes in another; I felt my weakneſs, and was diſheartened. I have now determined, and I ſhall keep to my original ſtyle, even if it ſhould not be very ſucceſsful to me here. The human figure and landſcape will now form my chief occupation, and I ſhall not neglect ſuch models as I can meet with in Rome in this ſtyle, although they are very rare, and ſhall ſtudy the art of colouring inceſſantly. The works of Berghem and of Roos are the moſt numerous of that kind here, and theſe artiſts in fact are the firſt in their ſtyle, although ſubjects of a more elevated nature excite a higher degree of admiration.

I have

I have for the laſt month been making little excurſions to the moſt pictureſque places in the neighbourhood of Rome, with a party of young artiſts. Our equipage conſiſts of an eaſel folded up like a ſtick, which may be carried in the hand; and a cloke bag thrown over the ſhoulder, in which we carry a camp ſtool and a ſmall box containing pencils, colours, and other neceſſary articles. Thus equipped, we gaily traverſe mountains and valleys, not unlike a caravan, halting wherever a beautiful view, or a pictureſque object, or a whim, or an inn invite us to take a little reſt. In this pleaſant manner of painting from nature, one's portfolio gets filled imperceptibly. Mine is already well ſtored with ſtudies, the greateſt part of which I have painted in oil.

Profeſſor Moritz alſo joins our travelling parties. He deſcribes with his pen, and frequently in a very happy ſtyle, what we ſketch with the bruſh or pencil. His extenſive knowledge of the hiſtory and literature of ancient Rome, renders him the very ſoul of our party. He often reads to us paſſages in hiſtory, which preſent to our minds at each remarkable ſpot, thoſe events which have rendered it memorable; or elſe he recites to us the deſcriptions that the Roman poets formerly wrote of the very places over which we are wandering. Thus we enjoy both the preſent and the paſt, and our days flow on in a ſpecies of enjoyment, to which, nothing that my life has hitherto afforded

afforded me, can bear the ſlighteſt compariſon. Albano was the firſt place at which we ſtopped. We had traverſed the plain celebrated for the combat between the Horatii and Curiatii; and numberleſs other places, which had witneſſed great exploits, had ſucceſſively paſſed before our eyes, when at the break of day we arrived at Albano. We ſtopped at the ruins of Domitian's villa, when Moritz opening his Juvenal, read to us the paſſage where that poet mentions the enormous fiſh that was brought to the emperor at this place, and which boaſted the honour of having received the deliberations of the ſenate on the ſauce that was proper to be eaten with it. We made many drawings here, and I even tried to ſketch the ruins of the amphitheatre. The profound ſilence of this deſerted ſpot, the reflections which preſent themſelves to the mind on the former grandeur of this abode, the ruins covered with briars, the well illumined maſſes which wore the moſt picturesque appearance, all theſe circumſtances combined, awakened my moſt lively feelings. I took my pencil, and immediately made the drawing which I now ſend you.

We afterwards continued our journey to the Volſcian mountains; the bad accommodations and ſtill worſe food we met with in this country, were ſufficient to overſet our good humour, if it had not been proof againſt every evil of this kind. For ſeveral days

days together, our principal meals were composed of chesnuts, which we roasted ourselves, in the shade of an inviting grove, or in some beautiful meadow. Our only consolation was good wine, which fortunately has never failed. However we continued to sing and dance, notwithstanding all our bad fare. In some places the inhabitants looked at our burlesque equipage with great eyes, and very innocently took us for treasure hunters; for it is generally believed by the common people, that a prodigious quantity of treasure lies buried in this part of the country. This idea diverted us very much, and we played a variety of tricks to confirm this suspicion, which, however, our anxiety to visit the ruins, and collect any remains of antiquity very naturally excited.

Near Aricia we saw the wood formerly sacred to Diana. A wall now encloses these ancient trees, and no one can be admitted without permission from the present possessor, which however we obtained. It was evening, such an evening as you see only in Italy: the moon was rising in the horizon; the sky was deliciously clear; the wood was a perfect solitude, and silence reigned uninterruptedly over this august shade. The gigantic trees spreading high in the air projected grand masses of shadow, and uniting at the top formed a vaulted roof, the majestic obscurity of which was occasionally interrupted by a ray of the moon. We strayed through the wood really impressed

preſſed with a religious awe. I returned the following morning, and ſketched ſome of the fineſt groups of the trees, with the intention of ſending them to you.

From the point of Monte Cavo we looked into the midſt of the Appenines; on the other ſide we had a view of the ſea, and the whole of Latium, with Rome in its boſom, lay extended before us. Formerly a celebrated temple conſecrated to Jupiter, ſtood in this picturesque ſituation; it is now in ruins, and a monaſtery occupies its place. The beautiful view, which preſented itſelf, and the animated recitations of Moritz, had tranſported us to the brilliant ages of antiquity, but the appearance of the monks in their black dreſſes, bearing a death's head on their breaſt, ſoon deſtroyed the pleaſing illuſion. A ſtorm, which ſuddenly came on at the ſame time, obliged us to ſeek ſhelter in the cloyſters. There, every thing that ſurrounded us appeared melancholy and uninviting, and we were beginning to loſe our gaiety when the ſunbeams darting through a cloud, reſtored the magnificent ſpectacle which lay beneath our feet, and which, now illumined in the moſt favourable manner, appeared adorned with increaſed brilliancy. Our ſpirits returned with the ſun, and we even became reconciled to the monks, who had at firſt ſo ſtrongly excited our wrath. It muſt be confeſſed, that

that a ſmall dinner, aſſiſted by ſome excellent wine, contributed ſomething to the change in our ſentiments.

We are at preſent in the little town of Marino, where we ſhall yet remain for a few days. We have taken up our quarters with three old maids who are very devout. We are obliged to paſs the evenings with them, and to liſten very attentively to ſome legendary tale or edifying hiſtory, with which their memory is abundantly ſtored; and in order not to be dubbed heretics, we are forced to tell our beads with them. Fortunately we have obtained permiſſion to tell them in German, ſo with this pretext we mutter any thing that comes into our heads.

In the church of St. Barnabas in this town are two pictures of Guercino; one placed over the great altar repreſents the martyrdom of the patron of the church, and the other in the cloyſters, that of St. Bartholomew. The latter is admirable for the colouring, but the figure is flayed too much. The picture of the Holy Trinity by Guido, is in the church of that name. This ſmall town is enlivened by the reſidence of ſeveral Roman noblemen who paſs the ſummer in its environs. The pretty villas, diſperſed over the foot of the high hill on which the town is built, give it a pleaſing and lively appearance.

In

In this journey I have made acquaintance with an hiſtorical painter of great talent, M. St. Urs of Geneva. Our friendſhip was quickly cemented; it was pleaſing to us, even in the beautiful plains of Italy, to converſe together of our native country.

You aſk me in your laſt letter, what has been ſaid here of your picture? I have not yet ſhewn it to many. Reifenſtein aſked me to lend it him for ſome time, and ſeems delighted with it. Madame Kauffman and Sablet appear equally pleaſed with it.

I do not limit myſelf merely to the name of the place in which we live; but as a little miniature garden partly ſurrounds it, and forms a very pretty view, I ſubjoin it to my letter; you will obſerve the little covered arbour; we ſometimes breakfaſt in it, and often paſs our evenings there.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER XLVIII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Nov. 26, 1787.

How long your letter was coming, my dear ſon! Do you know, that you made us wait for it twelve whole weeks? I deſire you will not teaze us in this way again. We heard, by means of a letter from Lips to one of his friends, that our excellent Kerſch was dead of a fever, and this intelligence cauſed many an unhappy hour to your mother. Thank God we are now relieved of our anxiety, by the good account you give of your health, and of the pleaſant excurſion you have been making. I repreſent to myſelf, with great ſatisfaction, the happineſs you have enjoyed during your travels, of which you give us ſo animated a deſcription. Such a union of artiſts, full of imagination, fire, and ſpirits rambling together over the moſt beautiful country in the world, to make ſtudies of its moſt intereſting ſituations, muſt certainly compoſe the beſt poſſible ſociety. What reciprocal encouragement and emulation muſt ariſe from ſuch an aſ-

ſemblage!

ſemblage! and when you all meet together at the expiration of a day ſo well employed, what a free and unreſerved ſtrain of pleaſantry muſt enliven your evening repaſt!

In your ſtudies from nature, you ſeem to be engaged more in painting than in drawing. The draughtſman is inattentive to the colour of objects, becauſe they are uſeleſs to him; but, in your caſe, colouring deſerves your attention, as well as form. In painting, it is eaſier for you to repreſent objects in a true and characteriſtic manner, and by that means you enſure a thouſand advantages which he is deprived of, who can only introduce into his pictures cold and unintereſting drawings.

I conclude that your principal occupation this winter will be copying, and ſtudying at the academy. I am impatient to know if you copy, and alſo what you copy. In landſcape, you are now ſufficiently familiar with nature to be able to judge what painter has been moſt ſucceſsful in repreſenting it, and in what parts he has ſhewn moſt merit. You may thus regulate yourſelf in the choice of your models, and I wiſh you to apply principally, this winter, to the ſtudy of landſcape painters; for by attempting too many things at once, you will acquire only confuſed ideas. Beſides, this practice will be of infinite uſe to you, on the return of

ſpring, when you will begin to work again from nature, by facilitating thoſe ſtudies. In thoſe hours when it is not poſſible for you to paint, you ſhould apply yourſelf to the ſtudy of the human figure from the fineſt ſubjects. No one can give you better advice on this matter than Trippel, Sablet, and your new friend St. Urs; conſult them, and if by chance they ſhould think, that you would do better by applying principally to the ſtudy of the human figure, as being the moſt difficult, I exhort you myſelf to follow their advice. It is of the utmoſt importance, that you ſhould have one particular ſtudy, be the object what it may, that you may be wholly engroſſed by it, and follow it cloſely, and without many impediments; for that is the only way of making any real progreſs. The reſolution you have formed of adhering to your original ſtyle, is quite conformable to my wiſhes. You are aware how many objects it embraces, and you ought to form your plan accordingly.

I hope, alſo, that you do not neglect reading ſome good authors; above all, I adviſe you to read Grecian and Roman hiſtory, the beſt Italian poets, ſuch as Taſſo, Arioſto, &c. good Italian tranſlations of the ancient poets, Homer, Virgil, Euripides, and Sophocles; and the works of Mengs, which are the beſt productions on what relates to your art.

The

The ſucceſs my picture has met with, gives me great pleaſure, but I am ſtill anxious to know the opinion of More. Endeavour to make this able artiſt your friend. Do not neglect Angelica, ſhe may be of great uſe to you with the Engliſh, and uſe alſo the introductory letters which I ſent you; they are all addreſſed to perſons of note, who have credit, and may be able to procure you admiſſion to ſuch cabinets as are moſt replete with objects of art.

Continue to court the ſociety of thoſe who add univerſal knowledge and talent to a taſte for the arts. That artiſt, who ſinks into nothing after he has quitted his pencil, is limited to a very ſmall portion of exiſtence.

I wiſh I could have been preſent at your interview with Orell, to enjoy your ſurpriſe. You muſt give me further details of it. He and M. de Salis, who, no doubt, has ſhewn you ſome attentions, may be of great ſervice to you at Naples. Tell me the general plan you have formed for your ſtudies this winter, and deſcribe to me all that you do very circumſtantially.

This day happens to be your birth-day, and we are going to celebrate it in due form. Your mother intends giving us a gala diſh, and I promiſe that a bottle of my beſt wine ſhall be emptied in honour of you.

Is Moritz ſtill at Rome, and what does he do there? Is Göthe there now? Are you acquainted with Heinſe, who has been ſome years in Italy? He publiſhed a tranſlation of Taſſo, written with great pretenſions to the ſublime, but on the whole rather mediocre. He is alſo very probably the author of a new novel, entitled Ardinghello, which contains ſome fine ſcenes, and ſome intereſting ſituations, deſcribed with much fire and energy; but which on the other hand, often treſpaſſes on delicacy and good morals, and the author very frequently allows himſelf to chatter on the fine arts without knowing much what he himſelf means. If young people, whoſe heads are but too eaſily exalted, allow themſelves to read ſuch books, they ought, at leaſt, to arm themſelves with much precaution. Farewell, my dear child; remember me to all my friends.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER XLIX.

J. GESSNER TO HER SON.

Zurich, Nov. 26, 1787.

YES indeed, my dear ſon, you coſt me many tears by your long ſilence. You thoughtleſs youths often forget very quickly, all that a good mother feels for her beloved children, and how eaſily this affection, which is ſo deeply engraven on our hearts, and is the motive of our continual ſolicitude and concern in educating you, how eaſily I ſay, it becomes the ſource of our moſt anxious care. Since I heard of the death of your friend Kerſch, I have always had that event in my mind, and knowing your attachment to your friends, my uneaſineſs daily increaſed. Your father endeavoured to baniſh my fears, but he ſuffered equally with myſelf, and your brother tried in vain to divert my thoughts from the cauſe of my anxiety, by affecting more gaiety than uſual. At length your letter arrived, and the day on which we received it, was truly a happy day for us as well as for all our

friends. For my part, I forgive you willingly for all you had made me ſuffer, now that I know you to be in good health, and that you have enjoyed ſo much pleaſure, and that our tranquillity is reſtored by ſo much good news. We immediately got all the maps and views which we poſſeſs, to aſſiſt us in following you in your travels, and were very much pleaſed to obſerve the good humour which accompanies you every where, and the vivacity which animates all your deſcriptions. We wait for the arrival of the drawings you promiſed us, with impatience; and I have already beſpoken them to ornament my chamber.

Nature has beſtowed on you one of her moſt valuable gifts, my dear ſon, by conferring on you that happy feeling of worth and beauty, without which the whole univerſe would be to us as nothing, and which alone gives a reliſh to life. Endeavour carefully to preſerve this ineſtimable preſent of indulgent nature; it will embelliſh, or at leaſt ſoften and ſoothe every part of your exiſtence, and will be the moſt certain pledge of ſucceſs in your art; but if once loſt, nothing can bring it back again, or compenſate for the want of it.

My mother appears to be younger, for every letter of yours that we receive, ſhe laughs and weeps

as

as ſhe reads, and deſires a thouſand affectionate things to you. Farewell my dear Conrad! your father, and ſiſter, and all your friends, deſire their kind remembrance to you.

J. GESSNER.

LETTER L.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, Nov. 20, 1787.

YES indeed, my dear father, the unexpected appearance of Orell, occaſioned me a very agreeable ſurpriſe. I was juſt returned from my firſt excurſion, and had been to ſee my friend Sablet, when a ſervant came to inform me, a ſtranger deſired to ſee me immediately. I went directly, and could ſcarcely believe my eyes, when I perceived our dear Orell. He had only two days to ſpend here, that he might ſatisfy his deſire of ſeeing Rome; and converſing of you with that true effuſion of heart, with which this worthy friend delights to ſpeak of you, made the time, which was already too limited, paſs like lightning. General de Salis alſo gave me every poſſible teſtimony of his attachment to you.

A relaxation of this kind was almoſt neceſſary to me; for ſince my return to Rome, the death of Kerſch affects me more than ever. I have not mentioned

mentioned this event to you before, becauſe at firſt, after ſo grievous a loſs, I had neither the power nor the will to inform you of it. He died a victim to his aſſiduity in his profeſſion. He had a picture to paint for the great altar in one of the churches of his native city; from that time, the houſe he inhabited became a ſort of priſon for him. He ſhut himſelf up with his picture in this inſulated habitation, which, from its ſituation, was very unwholeſome, and we ſaw him but very ſeldom. Added to this unceaſing application, and conſtant exertion of all his faculties, his exceſſive grief for the loſs of a brother, whom he tenderly loved, contributed to injure his health. We endeavoured in vain to alleviate his ſorrow, but it was only by redoubling his efforts and his labour, that he could diſpel the gloomy ideas that preyed upon him. At length, notwithſtanding his ſtrength of conſtitution, on which perhaps he placed too much dependance, he fell a victim to the infectious air he lived in, and was ſeized with a violent fever. After ſome time he grew better, and he thought himſelf quite recovered, when a ſudden relapſe carried him off in a few days. We interred him on the 23d of September. As, by being a proteſtant, we were denied the privilege of performing this duty to him in public, we were obliged to wait till the ſhades of night enabled us to accompany him to his laſt home in obſcurity and ſecrecy. Moritz, and ſome other of his friends,

undertook

undertook to fetch his body in a coach, and they carried it thus to the end of a long ſtreet which runs by the ſide of the Tiber. There the other coaches in which we were, and the conſtables whom we were obliged to engage for our ſecurity, joined the carriage containing the body, when the funeral advanced ſlowly and in perfect order, to the ſpot where the pyramid of Ceſtius ſtands. We there got out of the coaches, and ſome torches being lighted, we walked two and two after the bier; being arrived at the burial place, we ranged ourſelves in a circle round the grave. While the coffin was being placed in it, Moritz pronounced a ſhort funeral oration, which was not heard without emotion. We remained a few minutes in ſilence, contemplating this mournful ſcene. The grave was cloſed, the torches were extinguiſhed, and the deep ſhades of night were in uniſon with the melancholy feelings of our hearts.

Kerſch was, in every reſpect, a man of extraordinary merit. He had an excellent heart, an open generous diſpoſition, and a chearful ſerenity, which rendered his ſociety eaſy and pleaſant. As for his talent, it is difficult to meet with a man ſo entirely born an artiſt. He was a firſt rate draughtſman, and a true poet in his hiſtorical compoſitions; his abilities were daily improving by the ſtudy of the great models that he met with in Rome; a ſtudy which he followed with an intelligence ſo ſuperior,

and

and an application ſo intenſe, that he muſt undoubtedly have riſen to the higheſt rank in the art. To theſe acquirements he added an aſſiduous enquiry into ancient literature; he read Homer and Virgil in their original language, and ſtudied them continually.

The illneſs and death of this excellent young man gave riſe to an affecting circumſtance, which I will relate to you. A young Spaniſh eccleſiaſtic had lived a long time in the ſame houſe with him, without, however, having any other intercourſe with him than that merely of a neighbour. But as ſoon as Kerſch was taken ill, this young man flew to his aſſiſtance, performed the office of the moſt attentive nurſe, and never left his bed for an inſtant. When the fever had abated, and Kerſch thought himſelf out of danger, the Spaniard made a little excurſion with him to that part of the country in which Horace's villa is ſituated; but they were ſcarcely arrived when the fever returned, and put a period to his exiſtence. The Spaniard then uſed every effort to convey the body of his friend to Rome, and procure it a reſpectable interment; but it was not without a great deal of trouble and expence, that he could obtain a carriage for that purpoſe. The corpſe was placed in it, dreſſed as uſual, and the Spaniard ſeated himſelf by its ſide; all was well till they got to the gates of Rome, but there, every thing

was

was to be feared; fortunately the coachman was a reſolute man, and, aſſiſted by the Spaniard, he made ſome holes in the back of the coach, and by means of ſome cords paſſed through them, they contrived to keep the body in an upright poſition. They drew the curtains of the windows, and the Spaniard placed himſelf behind the carriage as a footman, holding the cords which were tied round the body, and thus entered the gates of Rome in a full trot, without moleſtation. This worthy prieſt is called Don Gineſe.

I am now ſettled again at Rome, with my dear friend Sablet; and at preſent am employed in carefully finiſhing ſome ſtudies from nature. I have alſo painted a picture under the immediate inſpection of Sablet, and I feel indebted to my friend for much inſtruction, which has been very uſeful to me, and of the neceſſity of which I had but little idea. I keep my pallet as clean as poſſible, for I perceive, that unleſs the colours are mixed with care, there can be no certainty of the tint; after repeated trials the picture becomes ſpotty, and the colouring gets black and dirty.

I am haſtening to finiſh a copy from Claude Lorraine; and I ſhall attend the academy very conſtantly this winter, to draw from nature, and alſo from the antique. I ſhall ſtudy the beautiful

forms of the latter with particular care. Mr. Trippel has given me permiſſion to viſit him as often as I like; he has lent me a ſmall Hercules of a very good form, which I am now drawing. In the evening, Sablet employs himſelf in giving me and ſome of his friends, leſſons in perſpective and architecture; the knowledge of this ſcience is indiſpenſable to a landſcape painter; and Pouſſin employed it to the greateſt advantage.

I do not neglect drawing horſes from nature, for I am perfectly aware what little progreſs I have made in this branch. I find great aſſiſtance in it from ſtudying a large anatomical model, which I frequently conſult. I make all my ſtudies on a large ſcale, becauſe they require more attention, and it is eaſier to neglect the detail when the drawing is ſmall. It is thus that we live, united with a ſmall circle of artiſts, in a peaceful retired manner, and wholly dedicated to our art. We give each other advice with frankneſs, and mutually excite each other to follow, with rapid ſtrides, that track which each has choſen, that he may attain perfection. After employing the winter in this manner, we hope to reap a double harveſt in our ſtudies from nature, which will recommence with the ſpring.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER LI.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Jan. 2, 1788.

A HAPPY new year to you, my dear ſon, may heaven preſerve you in health; but you muſt, on your part, be careful to continue well by carefully avoiding every ſpecies of exceſs in a climate which is ſo dangerous to foreigners. You muſt alſo occaſionally deviate from the uniformity of your ſedentary life, and the intenſeneſs of your application, by ſome amuſement, and particularly by frequent exerciſe. How many young people would be ſtill living, or at leaſt would enjoy a more eſtabliſhed health, if they had followed this advice! you ſhould ſometimes ride on horſeback, to aſſiſt the circulation of the blood, and ſtrengthen your digeſtion. If it is not always convenient to you to procure a handſome horſe for this exerciſe, content yourſelf with a hack, or even with a humble donky, and do not neglect uſing it often. Beſides which, in theſe little rides, without having any particular object in view, you may frequently meet with beautiful

beautiful parts of landſcapes, and thus draw a double advantage from them.

I was well aſſured, that Orell's viſit muſt occaſion you an agreeable ſurpriſe. I would not mention it to you before-hand, that you might enjoy all the pleaſure of an unexpected meeting. I am much pleaſed that M. de Salis is ſo friendly to you, and indeed I expected it. All this, I hope, will be of ſervice to you at Naples, particularly in what relates to military and hunting ſcenes. You will not do amiſs by ſtudying the latter a little, and occaſionally painting from nature, dogs of different kinds.

The diſtribution of your ſtudies for this winter, is very judiciouſly arranged. Obſerve well the grand and noble forms of the antique. You muſt however, recollect, that by confining yourſelf too much to the ſtudy of detached figures, you may find yourſelf embarraſſed when forming groups, and will combine them with ſtiffneſs and affectation. In order to avoid this defect, it may be uſeful to exerciſe yourſelf in making ſketches of good compoſitions and beautiful groups, but always from the beſt maſters. I adviſe you, alſo, to carry always about you proper implements for drawing. You will often meet with groups combined by chance, in the ſtreets and public places, which form beautiful pictures with the utmoſt variety of effect. But nature! I muſt always refer

refer you to that! contemplate nature as if it were an animated picture, and be always on the watch for the beauties it preſents, that you may impreſs them on your mind. Endeavour to become familiar with them, in order to be able to judge who have imitated them with moſt ſucceſs, then ſtudy thoſe imitators, that you may learn what methods they have purſued to repreſent nature ſo faithfully; but ſelect from among them, thoſe only whoſe taſte, added to fidelity of repreſentation, has pointed out the moſt advantageous objects. Oh nature, my ſon! follow nature! for what gave ſuch inimitable grace to Titian, ſuch ſtriking truth to Vandyck? They obſerved nature with unceaſing attention; they acquired, with the moſt delicate degree of feeling, thoſe ſhades and tones, which, to other eyes, were almoſt imperceptible. Imitate them, and when you have gained this habit of obſervation, you will never caſt your eyes on any part without deriving ſome inſtruction from it.

We feel infinitely obliged to Trippel and Sablet, for their kindneſs to you, which is a proof of true friendſhip. Tell them ſo from us, and aſſure them of my beſt regard.

We are extremely deſirous of ſeeing again ſome of your works. What Orell told us of you does not leſſen our opinion of your abilities. Send me by

by the firſt opportunity, ſomething that may do you credit. I imagine, that you are now employed in copying a picture of Claude or of Pouſſin; if you have not already begun, I adviſe you to loſe no time, but begin directly.

I am very glad, my ſon, that you are not yet pleaſed with your horſes; many others would feel perfectly ſatisfied with them, I aſſure you. It is a proof, that you ſee nature, which is always ſo difficult to imitate well, exactly as it is, and that you poſſeſs a perfect image in your mind of every object you ſee. Court every opportunity of drawing and painting from the fineſt horſes; and as it is very probable that you may go to Naples, chuſe ſuch ſtudies as may bring you credit, if you have occaſion for them. To this end it will be neceſſary, that you ſhould ſtudy heads with attention, for the purpoſe both of form and colouring. I hear, that Hackert has painted the king of Naples on horſeback hunting, and that the picture does not poſſeſs much merit.

I lately adviſed you to read the works of Mengs, and I now recommend for your peruſal, that of Leonardo da Vinci. Theſe will be very uſeful books for you. In ſhort, tell me if you read at all, and what you read.

Do you often ſee More, and are you on friendly terms with him? Do you ſee Angelica ſometimes? What are Sablet, Lips, Meyer, and Kölla doing? Remember me to them all, not forgetting Mr. Denis and St. Urs. How fortunate you are, my ſon, to have ſuch friends! friends, who muſt poſſeſs the greateſt influence over your heart and mind, by their character and acquirements, and whoſe well-grounded knowledge in their art muſt add to the improvement of your talents.

My ſiſter has been attacked by a lingering illneſs, and her weakneſs increaſes ſo much that no hopes are entertained of her recovery. This melancholy reflection frequently diſturbs the tranquillity, which would otherwiſe be uninterrupted, of our domeſtic circle. That excepted, we are all in good health, and join in every good wiſh to you.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER LII.

S. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Jan. 6, 1788.

My letter was forgotten, and I will avail myſelf of the omiſſion to add to it a few lines. I have this moment ſeen a very ſtrange letter from ———, who is very proud of the friendſhip of ———. He gives way, without reflexion, to his extravagant notions, and is dazzled by his own pompous phraſes, which are varniſhed over with an air of originality. ——, as he confeſſes himſelf, has inculcated in him the great maxim, that it is right to contemn the judgment of other men, and not to conſult any perſon on one's own works. What abſurdity and fooliſh pride, thus to place himſelf above the reſt of the world, as if he were the only rational being, and that the reſt of the earth were peopled with inſenſate animals! Let him point out to me any artiſt or learned man, or in fact any one, who has been really great in his way, who has not obtained the juſtice due to his merit, from the greateſt part of his contempo-

raries, or at leaſt from poſterity. Among the moderns, Mengs is a ſtriking example of the truth of this obſervation. All Europe ſpoke of him, even during his life, in the higheſt terms of reſpect.

What madneſs is it to attend only to one's own judgment and feeling! He, who poſſeſſes ſufficient pride to be led aſtray by it on this point, is in the high road to folly. If I do not impartially diſcuſs the praiſes and cenſures of which I am the object, if I pay no regard to the different manner of ſeeing and feeling of others, how ſhall I be convinced, that mine is the beſt? My taſte may eaſily become corrupted, and my ſentiment depraved. This cauſe produces thoſe wild imaginations, thoſe heated brains, that call themſelves original gênius's, who, blinded by the ſmoke of their own incenſe, and ſeeing all objects either too large or too ſmall, diſfigure every thing that offers itſelf to their perception, and delineate wild phantoms inſtead of ſimple truth. For heaven's ſake, my dear ſon, do not ſuffer yourſelf to be ſeduced by their example! they have, I confeſs, ſomething inviting in their language, and thoſe, who, from a lively ſenſibility and ardent imagination, do not allow themſelves time to reflect ſeriouſly, may eaſily be led aſtray. But believe my words, let theſe gentlemen gallop away on their winged aſſes, beyond the limits of good ſenſe and good taſte, but do you remain in the path that is traced by ſound rea-

ſon,

ſon, and may the delirium of a fevered imagination never tempt you to deviate from it; profit from greatneſs and excellence wherever you meet with it; be liberal towards every one according to his deſerts, and always remember, that modeſty is the faithful companion of true wiſdom and true merit. Do not imagine that all this is mere ill humour; no, it is ſerious advice which I give you, becauſe I believe it really neceſſary, and becauſe I wiſh to put you on your guard againſt the contagious whims of ſome men, whoſe genius and talents in other reſpects, I acknowledge and admire.

I muſt add a few words, as there is room on the paper. You tell me, you begin, under the friendly direction of M. Sablet, to keep your pallet in better order, and to mix and uſe your colours with more care and neatneſs. A thouſand thanks to your excellent friend! tell him how ſincerely grateful I feel for his attention. By profiting thus from his knowledge, you will acquire a degree of facility, which, perhaps, without him you could never have attained. Obſerve both him and other able artiſts, while they are at their eaſel. Study their different manners of working, whether in ſketching or in finiſhing. Would it not be uſeful to make a collection containing a ſlight ſpecimen of each mixture of colours which might ſtrike you, writing under each tint of what colours they are compoſed, and in what pro-

portions? One more queſtion I muſt aſk, which indeed I repeat in all my letters. Do you avail yourſelf of the view, which you have from your window, particularly in obſerving the ſkies? Conſider what an advantage is a well adapted ſky to the general effect of a picture, and how much the reverſe diſfigures it. Farewell, farewell. We all join in kindeſt regards to you.

Your aunt ceaſed to breathe this morning; her life extinguiſhed gradually like a lamp.

S. GESSNER.

LETTER LIII.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, Jan. 5, 1788.

I HAVE at length been obliged, like others, to pay tribute to this climate. The too ſedentary life I had hitherto led, inflamed my blood; I was ſuddenly attacked by a violent fever, which confined me to my bed, and did not even allow of my writing to you. I was bled, and took a prodigious quantity of bark, and then I began to recover. As ſoon as I perceived the favourable alteration that had taken place, I began painting again, notwithſtanding the phyſician forbad it, and I have painted a moon-light. The ſcene is a freſh and pleaſing landſcape, watered by a ſmall ſtream which flows through the middle of a narrow valley; in the foreground, horſes are coming to drink under ſome large trees, that ſhade the banks of the rivulet. I think I have ſucceeded pretty well in repreſenting the pale light, which is reflected from the moon in the water, and the bubbling of the ſtream running over a bed of ſtones. The perſpective is terminated by a large mountain, behind which the

moon is rising in the horizon. Every evening when the moon shone, I studied from my window, with my eyes fixed on a little hill covered with trees, that species of twilight or semi-darkness, which is so charming in nature, but so difficult to express with the pencil. I believe I have delineated on the canvas what I then felt, with tolerable accuracy, and my friends also do not appear dissatisfied with the picture. I never yet painted any thing with so much delight. Perhaps the pleasure I felt was in a great measure derived from the agreeable sensation of convalescence, and the progressive return of my strength, but certainly much more to the resemblance of one part of my landscape to a particular spot at Sihlwald. This resemblance seemed to transport me to your side. My heart felt expanded and happy. But alas! a fresh attack of my fever, although fortunately not so violent as the former one prevented me from finishing my work. I was obliged to submit, with sensations doubly painful, to the imperious orders of nature, and return to my sick chamber, and even to celebrate the festival of the new year in my bed. I am, however, now beginning to recover again, and the fever is considerably diminished. During my illness, Sablet attended me with the most friendly solicitude, and I had the good fortune to meet with an able physician, who prescribes the most perfect rest and tranquillity for some time longer, and afterwards great and frequent exercise.

It

It is mortifying, that my illneſs will entirely prevent the reſolution I had made of employing the greateſt part of the winter in copying; for I ſhall not dare to venture, for a conſiderable time, to the galleries, which are always very cold. I ſhall endeavour to compenſate for this loſs by working in my own room as aſſiduouſly as my health will permit. Fortunately, I have a good proviſion of drawings and ſtudies from nature, more or leſs finiſhed and coloured, which will be of great uſe in enabling me to finiſh, with more care, ſome ſketches which are very happily compoſed. I have made a diſtribution of my time; I employ ſome hours of every day in the ſtudy of the human figure, ſome I dedicate to that of architecture, ſo neceſſary to a landſcape painter in the noble ſtyle of compoſition; and Sablet continues to give us lectures in perſpective every evening. I feel, very forcibly, what a taſk it is to become an artiſt in the full extent of the word. Unfortunately, very few things can be done at a time. Our progreſſion is ſo ſlow, and life is ſo ſhort! however, I will not be diſcouraged, and as ſoon as I have recovered my ſtrength, I ſhall proceed with freſh ardour. As I have already told you, we form a little ſociety of artiſts, and are wholly engroſſed by our art, and by friendſhip. We work all the day, and ſometimes night approaches without our perceiving that the day is gone. We then paſs

the

the reſt of the evening in reading, talking, and laughing; and thus the days glide away like ſo many minutes.

As ſoon as I am able to walk, or rather to run and ſkip, for I ſhall ſurely ſkip for joy, when I ſee the ſun again, I ſhall call on More, and I will let you know immediately what opinion he entertains of your picture.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER LIV.

6. GESSNER TO HIS SON.

Zurich, Jan. 22, 1788.

HEAVEN be praiſed that you are recovered, my dear ſon! it is fortunate that we were ignorant of your illneſs. Your long ſilence rather diſpleaſed us, but we were not uneaſy. Your brother was the only one who knew the reaſon of it by a letter from Lips; but, like a prudent boy, he took care not to inform us of it. I intreat you now to attend to your phyſician, and ride on horſeback. I conclude you have, by this time, taken meaſures to procure yourſelf a good horſe. One more piece of advice I muſt give you: be careful, when you draw, not to ſtoop, or lean your cheſt on your work; you know how I have guarded againſt this inconvenience in the conſtruction of my little table. You had better defer your ſtudies in the galleries till a more favourable period. Would it not be poſſible to borrow ſome picture either from More or from ſome private collection, to ſtudy at your own houſe?

As

As we imagine that your illneſs muſt have occaſioned you ſome expence, in order that you may not be expoſed to any embaraſſment, we encloſe a bill of exchange, which you may immediately convert into caſh.

Your laſt letter gave us much ſatisfaction, for more reaſons than one. Beſides the pleaſing intelligence of your recovery, which made us ſhed tears of joy, all its contents afforded us very high gratification. Every line proves the candour and goodneſs of your heart; every ſentence confirms the zeal which animates you for your art; that zeal, without which no artiſt can obtain real talent; for all this my heart glows towards you with true paternal affection. You are right, my ſon, perfectly right! Our progreſſion is ſlow, and our life is ſhort, I agree with you; at leaſt it is proper to think ſo, for it is only by calculating with ſuch ſcrupulous ſeverity, the days and minutes of our exiſtence, that we ſhall be able to find the means of multiplying them, and of doing a great deal in a few years. Continue thus, and that round of ſtudies, which you ought to impoſe on yourſelf as a duty, will always extend itſelf, and in order to accompliſh it, you will be continually obliged to increaſe your efforts. In proportion as you advance, the goal, to which you aſpire, will appear the more diſtant from you; but at every

ſtep,

ſtep, at every freſh exertion that you make to attain it, it will appear more diſtinctly in view.

I am alſo very well pleaſed to obſerve you avoid all diſſipation, and that you limit your ſociety to a ſmall circle of friends, who are linked together by their love for the arts. Animated by ſuch a ſentiment, you inſpire each other with the moſt noble emulation, and every difficulty becomes leſs formidable. I frequently fancy myſelf in your little academy; and I ſhould like, alſo, to be preſent during your hours of relaxation, to partake of your gaiety. Remember me to all my friends, particularly to our very valuable friend Sablet. May heaven bleſs him for all that he has done for me! Farewell. Write very ſoon in anſwer to all the queſtions which I have aſked you in my laſt letters.

S. GESSNER.

Jan. 24, 1788.

My father has given me his letter to cloſe, and I muſt add a few lines. Since we heard of your illneſs, which we would not diſcloſe to any one, both your ſiſter and myſelf have been in a ſtate of continual uneaſineſs. Our mother was, during this time, confined to her bed by illneſs, and was therefore ſtill more

more ſubject to feel thoſe alarms, which your ſilence naturally excited. My father alone was apparently calm, and endeavoured to keep up our ſpirits, but I believe, that inwardly he wanted ſupport himſelf. At length, your letter arrived. You ſhould have ſeen with what joy we all received it! Each was anxious to read it in his turn, and tried to be the firſt to remark thoſe paſſages, which were moſt gratifying; all this gave riſe to a ſcene of domeſtic happineſs equally tender and joyful.

Every thing now goes on again as uſual. My mother has recovered her health, and my father is as induſtrious and chearful as he was wont to be. He ſees but little company this winter, but to compenſate for this, Heſs, Meyer, and Freudweiler, frequently paſs the evening with us. They read and converſe, chiefly on the arts, and they alſo talk much of you. My father ſeems to take great delight in the ſociety of theſe young men, who poſſeſs much talent and merit, and who feel an almoſt filial attachment for him. Thus our days paſs in peaceful and unclouded calmneſs, and glide away inſenſibly, notwithſtanding the ſimplicity, and even uniformity, of our manner of living. Sometimes, but very ſeldom, a ſlight ſhade of melancholy ſeems to obſcure the conſtant ſerenity of our good father, yet even then he is as affectionate and amiable as uſual. It was in one of theſe moods that he gave

me,

me, a few days ſince, a leſſon which will ever remain engraven on my memory. I cannot reſiſt deſcribing to you the ſcene, which affected me ſo ſtrongly, and repeating the leſſon which, no doubt, was addreſſed equally to us both.

Sunday evening we were ſitting together in our parlour, and obſerving the ſetting ſun, which gradually ſunk beneath a clouded horizon. I begged my father to mend me a pen, which he did immediately. Some minutes after, returning into the room, I found this ſentence written in large characters on my letter caſe: "Misfortune is the touchſtone of man." Equally ſurpriſed and alarmed, I looked at my father: "For heaven's ſake, what does this mean?" I exclaimed, with ſome degree of emotion. He replied, ſmiling: "This ſentence flowed naturally from the pen, when I was going to try it." We remained ſilent for a conſiderable time. My father remarked my agitation, and caſting his eyes on me with the moſt expreſſive countenance, "I ſee," ſaid he, in an affectionate tone of voice, which I ſhall never forget, "I plainly ſee, that I have given "you pain; I will eraſe what I have written. "But although it be effaced from this page, let it "ever be preſent in your memory and in your "heart." I was extremely affected; and he appeared, by his increaſing chearfulneſs and tenderneſs, to wiſh to endear the remembrance of that moment,

moment, and impreſs it more ſtrongly on my mind. I know, my dear brother, you would be diſpleaſed if I neglected to impart to you any circumſtance which tended, like this, to characteriſe the excellent heart of our reſpectable father.

Farewell, my dear brother; write to us ſoon.

H. GESSNER.

LETTER LV.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, Jan. 20, 1788.

THE fever has, at length, entirely left me, and I have reſumed my cuſtomary ſtudies and occupations. I have paid my firſt viſit to Trippel, who received me with the moſt affectionate friendſhip, and immediately propoſed our taking a walk together. As we rambled on, we found ourſelves imperceptibly in the neighbourhood of the Vatican, and in the court containing the ſtatues of Belvidere. It was a moſt agreeable ſurpriſe to me to find myſelf thus unexpectedly in this enchanted and ideal world. I could never feel ſatisfied. It was almoſt impoſſible to be completely ſo with wandering, with my friend, in the midſt of theſe perſonified gods, who, notwithſtanding their deification, poſſeſſed the character of mortals, under the fineſt of the human form, rather than of beings of a higher order. I will not attempt to deſcribe them to you, although, thanks to my friend, theſe celeſtial images are now no longer beautiful phantoms in my mind, but leave

an impreſſion more compleat and diſtinct than they did formerly. It is better, no doubt, to refer you to the deſcription, that Winckelman has given of them, in which he has not only expreſſed what he felt with equal energy and clearneſs, but has alſo given a ſort of ſpecimen of the objects he deſcribes. We afterwards entered the Loggias of Raphael, where his immortal genius has aſſumed the moſt varied forms, and where it ſtill exiſts in its priſtine brilliancy, in theſe indeſtructible ſpecimens of it, notwithſtanding the barbarous gloom and even dampneſs of the rooms, which contain them. We remained ſome time in the hall of Conſtantine. All the hiſtorical pictures in this hall were deſigned by Raphael, and painted after his death by his pupils. The firſt picture neareſt the entrance, repreſents the emperor previous to the battle againſt Maxentius, exhorting his troops to the combat. He ſeems to be ſhowing his army the celeſtial croſs, which angels are ſuſpending in the clouds. The numerous groups, which ſurround him, and which are diſpoſed with the beſt effect, appear to be gradually animated by his eloquence, and become inſpired with martial ardour. Even the ſmalleſt details in this picture are of a grand deſign. The following one, which repreſents the battle itſelf, excites the moſt lively intereſt. The innumerable multitude of men, and infinite variety of attitudes, which are totally free from confuſion or embarraſſment, excite aſtoniſh-

ment.

ment. The conception of this picture was the thought of a mind replete with fire and vigour, whose pencil was equally bold and firm. The disposition is admirable. The field of battle seems so extensive that the eye can scarcely embrace it. All is life and motion. There is not a single group that does not excite a peculiar interest, and possess a striking expression. In short, the beauties are so multiplied, that in contemplating this great work, one forgets, that a more agreeable style of colouring might be desirable, and a greater connexion throughout the different parts of the whole. As the day began to close, we could only cast a rapid glance on the pictures in the other rooms, that we might give a little more time to Trippel's favourite picture, the School of Athens. The scene is laid in a temple, of simple but majestic architecture. Each of the philosophers, who are assembled, carries in his countenance and attitude the distinguishing character which is attributed to him in history. The manner in which the groups are composed, is not less characteristic, and Raphael has introduced various portraits in this picture, with so much address, that the figures lose nothing of beauty or appropriate expression. His colouring is, I think, better in this picture than in any of his other works; all the figures are noble and graceful, and the draperies are admirable.

In the picture of Parnassus the composition of

the groups is alſo very ingenious. The moſt celebrated poets of antiquity, as well as thoſe of modern Italy, are introduced, and the reſpective ſituations given them by the artiſt, diſplay the utmoſt correctneſs of judgment. Raphael has painted his own portrait by the ſide of Homer and Virgil; the latter ſeems ſpeaking to Dante, and ſhewing him Apollo. A little farther, Horace is expreſſing his admiration of Pindar, and Sappho particularly has an expreſſion, which nothing can equal.

Here I terminated the firſt excurſion, I made after my illneſs. I have ſince been with Trippel to ſee the Altieri palace, where I ſaw two ſuperb pictures of Claude Lorraine. The firſt is a landſcape, in which the Sybil's temple ſtands by the ſide of a lake. Some large trees cover it with their cooling ſhade; rays of light occaſionally pierce through their tufted foliage, and a delightful path leads to the lake, which loſes itſelf in the diſtant horizon. The inimitable and magic grace of Claude pervades the whole of this picture, and is equally obſervable in the other, which is properly a ſea view. The ſea occupies almoſt its whole extent; ſcarcely any thing, excepting ſky and water, are to be ſeen, and yet the able manner, in which the artiſt has varied the tones of colouring, preſents the moſt agreeable effect to the eye.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER LVI.

C. GESSNER TO HIS FATHER.

Rome, Feb. 6, 1788.

I have been with More to-day, and had leiſure to examine his Latin works. In general, I obſerve in his pictures a grand and poetic ſtyle of compoſition, a brilliant and forcible colouring, light and tranſparent ſkies, and an enchanting harmony; but they are ſometimes rather mannered. In his foregrounds, I think, he is ſometimes negligent, but frequently too ſtudied. He is particularly fond of a purpliſh tint, which, in fact, in Italy is obſervable in ſummer on every object, which is at a certain diſtance. In nature, this effect is beautiful, but as it is extremely delicate and evaneſcent, it is very difficult to expreſs it well in painting.

Denis has alſo juſt finiſhed ſome pictures; they do not indeed poſſeſs the romantic and poetic ſtyle of compoſition of More's, but they diſplay an exquiſite feeling of nature, and the moſt happy talent for correct imitation.

C. GESSNER.

LETTER LVII.

H. GESSNER TO HIS BROTHER.

Zurich, March 5, 1788.

You have, no doubt, heard from Lips the alarming intelligence, which he was desired to communicate to you; you already know, that our good father had experienced a violent attack of apoplexy. Summon all your presence of mind, my dear brother; it is too true, that Providence has taken him from us. Thursday, the twenty-eighth of February, at ten o'clock in the morning, he had an apoplectic fit; a second attack, which came on in the night, deprived him entirely of his speech: from that time he was almost constantly in a state of stupor, and Sunday, the second of March, at five in the evening, he ceased to breathe. His death was like his life, gentle and serene, without pain, or at least, without convulsion or agony.

Endeavour, my dear brother, to calm your feelings as much as possible. We are all composed, your mother, sister, aunt, and all our friends. He

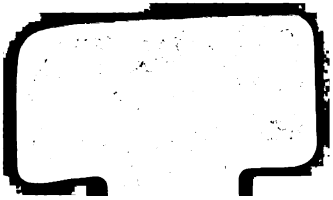
is

is not yet buried; he lies on his bier, his face uncovered, and his habitual ſerenity is ſtill imprinted on his features. Friday evening he recovered for a few minutes from the ſtate of inſenſibility, in which he had lain, and made ſigns to us to approach. In a faint voice he called each of us by our name; he named you alſo, and tenderly preſſing our hands, he ſeemed to beſtow his bleſſing on us all. He then went to ſleep again. He awoke at intervals, and the ſame ſerenity always continued in his countenance and manner. Think what an affecting, yet painful ſight it was for us to behold him in his laſt moments, touching his right hand with his left almoſt continually, and moving his fingers as if he wiſhed to draw! The ſecond day he moved them with greater eaſe, and ſeemed to feel pleaſure in it. Steinbruchel, Füſsli, Lundolt, &c. who were aſſembled round his bed, melted into tears, whenever he caſt his eyes on them and on us with that affectionate expreſſion which was ſo common to him. We muſt ever lament his loſs, my dear brother; but let us not murmur at the decrees of heaven. What do we not owe to Providence! It had given us the beſt of fathers, and we have enjoyed the greateſt advantages with him and by him. A good education, and principles which muſt, as long as we adhere to them, enſure our happineſs: theſe were his gifts to us, and they are invaluable. Think alſo, with the activity natural to his character, how melancholy

the

the reſt of his days would have been, as the paralytic affection of his right ſide muſt have obliged him to relinquiſh all employment! What a conſtant object of affliction would he have been to us in ſuch a ſtate! Let us not murmur then, but preſerve, deeply engraven on our hearts, thoſe beautiful words, which he had written himſelf a few weeks ſince, dictated perhaps, alas! by a ſecret preſentiment of his death.

H. GESSNER.

THE END

T. Bensley, Printer, Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London.